

‘Intense levels of pressure’ force office staff to volunteer on frontline services

News Article



Increasing numbers of patients visiting A&E coupled with rising complexities in treatment have driven bosses at two hospitals to ask office staff to volunteer on frontline services.

Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust have today implemented ‘Operation Wintergreen’ as part of overall plans to deal with winter pressures.

The staff are expected to be used as ‘runners’, freeing up some tasks so that nurses and other healthcare professionals can deal directly with patients.

In addition, routine surgery and some outpatient clinics will be cancelled for eight days going forward, in an attempt to free up clinical specialists for other important medical tasks, similar to the [countrywide postponement of certain procedures](#) earlier this month.

The plans involve the trust’s two main hospitals,

Hull Royal Infirmary, and East Riding Community Hospital, which have both been hit more than 95% bed occupancy.

Chris Long, CEO at Hull and East Yorkshire, said: “Since the start of the year, we have struggled not only with an increasing number of patients turning up at A&E but also with the complexity and seriousness of their conditions.

“We are not alone in experiencing increasing and intense levels of pressure this winter and most acute hospitals in England are in identical positions.

“In Hull, as a two-site hospital where the majority of our elective work takes place at Castle Hill Hospital, we have so far managed to avoid cancelling all non-urgent surgery in the way that many other trusts across the country have been doing since NHS England issued guidance in December.

“The time has now come, however, for us to take more extensive action and we owe it to our patients and staff to ensure we are there for the people who need us most.”

Patients with long-term conditions who would be adversely affected by cancellations or postponed treatment, cancer surgery and urgent appointments will not be affected, however, all other patients who will be hit by the plans are being contacted by staff.

Michelle Kemp, director of operations for Family and Women’s Health Group at the trust, said it was not entirely clear how many operations would be cancelled as of deciding on the plans.

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She confirmed that the only procedures to be cancelled would be those in which “patients will suffer no immediate clinical harm as a consequence.”

Chief operating officer, Ellen Ryabov, added: “By taking this action now, we hope to be in a far better position within ten days to cope with any potential impact of flu or a continuation of the recent increase in patient acuity that we have seen in recent weeks.

“The trust’s senior leadership team will be continually monitoring and assessing the impact of our decision to cancel elective work and how this benefits our emergency patients.

“We can then flex the deployment of additional staff resources to areas where we will see the greatest benefit for patients and frontline teams.”

It is not the first time this winter that a hospital has been forced to turn to non-medical staff to help in clinical roles. NHS Lanarkshire bosses asked back-office workers to join in with cleaning and administrative roles over the Christmas period after “unparalleled” demand put extreme pressure on services.

Source: National Health Executive

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