

26 WEEK INPATIENT BREACHES & CHOOSE & BOOK PERFORMANCE

Background

1. At the November 2009 meeting the board requested an update on performance against these two targets.

26 Week Inpatient Guarantee

2. The NHS guarantees that all elective patients will wait a maximum of 26 weeks from the point at which the decision to admit is taken for admitted care. Measurement of target achievement for individual patients can be complicated (any periods during which the patient is clinically unfit or not available for treatment are discounted). Although the target has been to some extent superseded by the 18-week target some of the Trust's patients (generally those with complex needs who require admission at Watford) can come close to this limit.
3. The national target requires that <0.03% of elective admissions breach the target. A greater proportion results in the Trust being categorised as 'underachieve', or 'fail' if the proportion exceeds 0.15%. For WHHT in the current year these thresholds translate to approximately 9 and 46 patients respectively. Performance against the target contributes to the overall Care Quality Commission assessment of the trust as well as to the DoH Performance Framework assessment.

Current Performance

4. In the year 2009-10 the Trust accrued 38 breaches and was assessed as 'underachieve'. In the current year the trust has accrued a total of 13 breaches to the end of December. However, 5 of these are attributed to a single patient who breached in February 2009, and under DoH rules will be removed from the total in this year's assessment, leaving a net total of 8 breaches. The pattern of these is summarised below:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
G Surg					1	1			1	3
Orth			1	1	1					3
O Surg	1	1								2
Total	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	8

5. As at 10th January 2010 the trust has 27 patients requiring admission before the end of March to avoid breaching. It is expected that all of these patients will be treated, although further severe weather may place this at risk.

Choose & Book

6. The Choose & Book system has been developed as part of the national NHS IT programme, and gives patients and GPs direct on-line access to the trusts patient administration system for the purposes of booking

appointments for referrals. The system was initiated in 2004 and has gradually extended such that almost all of the trust's services are now directly accessible.

7. The DoH originally anticipated that use of the system would encompass >90% of referrals within 2 years. In practice a combination of technical difficulties and some reluctance to move away from traditional letter-based referrals (both on the part of GPs and acute trusts) has meant that progress has been slower.
8. GP and patient willingness to use the system is clearly the primary driver in terms of the transition to electronic referrals. There is some evidence that this is significantly influenced by the availability of appointment slots on the Choose & Book system. This is determined by the trust's overall capacity on outpatients. Performance is assessed in terms of the proportion of patients that are unable to book the appointment they want because of 'slot issues'. All trusts are expected to achieve <5% 'slot issues' by the end of March 2010.

Current Performance

9. Currently approximately 50 – 60% of WHHT's referrals use the system with the remainder still using paper letters. This figure is at the national average for acute trusts, but has not improved for some months.
10. Patients experiencing 'slot issues' currently stands at 7% for the trust. This represents a significant improvement on performance in November and December when slot issues exceeded 15%, but may worsen once the impact of the holiday period has passed.
11. Addressing capacity shortfalls so as to eradicate slot issues problems is the trusts priority for internal action. A major review of OP clinic capacity has been completed and detailed work to address shortfalls in appointment numbers in key specialties is in hand. A full review of the trust's electronic Directory of Services is also under way. Elsewhere in the health community the PCT has reviewed the contractual arrangements in place with GPs and has provided on site training for all GP practice staff. All West Herts practices are now making use of the system (although not all GPs.)
12. In common with most trusts we are currently operating 2 parallel systems for OP appointments, manual and electronic via Choose & Book. Whilst we are required to continue to accept manual referrals, there are organisational advantages for patients, GPs and the trust in reducing manual referrals to a minimum. Improving access for GPs and patients is key and trust staff are working closely with PCT staff and GP representatives to achieve this.

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