

SEHSCT Service Delivery Plan - Quarter 4 addendum (12/01/22)

Background

The Trust Service Delivery Plan for Quarter 4 covers the period from January to March 2022. However, it is recognised that in the production of Trust plan for Quarter 3, the Trust worked on the planning assumption that the plan would broadly cover the full winter period. The Trust reviewed and updated its plan in November/December 2021 to ensure robust planning remained in place throughout Quarter 4.

Due to the timing of these plans, the documents do not specifically take into account the potential impact of Omicron.

It has become clear over the last few weeks that the Omicron variant is less severe than Delta and will not have a further impact on the availability of acute beds over and above what is already set out in Trust plans. On this basis the Trust, in agreement with the HSCB, has not updated the model for acute beds.

However, it is anticipated that the levels of infection associated with Omicron will impact on the staffing resource across HSC services and in this regard the Trust has been asked to refresh Quarter 4 plans to take into account the downturn in staffing as a result of Omicron.

This addendum sets out the additional escalated Trust actions resulting from Omicron which are not detailed in the main Quarter 4 plan.

Additional escalated Trust actions

Given the emergence of omicron variant in NI and the resulting increased community transmission alongside increased staff absence rates South Eastern Trust (SET) has been continually reviewing its winter plans. As an organisation SET will endeavour to keep as many services operational as possible; however it is highly likely that many will be impacted given staff availability. Patient and client safety remains the priority of the Trust.

In line with the regional modelling SET anticipates the pressure to be greatest in the next 6 weeks with a peak in demand circa 24/01/22 for approximately 2 to 6 weeks. At that time the priority will be to focus on the most acutely unwell patients and to maintain where possible patient flow in the unscheduled journey through timely discharge. In order to do this we are working tirelessly to implement all actions as outlined in our winter plans. However in keeping with the risk of loss of staff resource to those key operational services SET is preparing to implement the following additional escalated actions:

- 1) Workforce prioritisation and allocation to highest clinical priority areas.
- 2) Pause appropriate corporate services to redeploy personnel to support the key operational services identified.
- 3) Prioritise electives in the Ulster, Lagan Valley and Downe Hospitals in line with the Regional Prioritisation Oversight Group (RPOG), taking into consideration the Regional Covid-19 Critical Care Surge Level.
- 4) Review visiting in line with regional guidance.

To be in a state of readiness the Trust has implemented the following:

- 1) EMT Winter Strategic Co-ordinating Group meeting daily.
- 2) The Winter Response Liaison Group and Incident response hub have been established. There is a robust process in place to collate and escalate all issues arising and for escalation to HSC Silver via sitreps.
- 3) A workforce hub has been established to coordinate allocation of staff to high priority service areas.
- 4) Operational services conduct daily situation reviews and decisions are taken to downturn services as necessary to manage highest clinical priority service areas.
- 5) Additional capacity to support the demand for swabbing and contact tracing activity.
- 6) Escalated focus on discharge management.
- 7) Maximising internal, external and regional workforce appeals.