



Greater Manchester Weekly Winter Stakeholder Briefing

Date: 3 February 2023 – issue 10

Introduction:

Demand for services tends to increase significantly with the onset of colder weather. However, in recent years this pressure has been building throughout the year and not just in winter. This means winter is a challenging time for health and care services as a rise in seasonal illnesses places pressure on an already stretched system.

Colds, flu and other respiratory illnesses are more common in colder months, affecting patients and staff alike. For older people and people with long-term health conditions, cold weather can make some health problems worse. Cold weather can also mean an increase in physical injuries from slips, trips and falls.

All of this means demand on primary care grows, hospitals get fuller, and people stay longer, requests for social care increase and staff shortages rise.

Winter is expected to be difficult for many across the city-region, as the costs of energy, food and other bills rise.

Winter planning:

Winter pressures and planning is a key priority for all NHS and care organisations. Since last winter, all organisations have been sharing and implementing best practice to deliver system improvements and focus our collective efforts in preparing for winter. Our plans are aimed at three key areas: preparedness, prevention and protection against the major avoidable ill-effects of winter on people's health.

Updating you:

This weekly briefing is intended to update stakeholders on how services in Greater Manchester are performing and how we work together to manage demand and provide care and support to the public.

This week, we cover updates on **1. general practice and primary care, 2. urgent and emergency care and discharge, 3. Industrial action, 4. Flu and vaccinations and 5. public advice and signposting.** We share data to give context, provide signposting information and case studies. We also include a statement from NHS Greater Manchester and give content which you can share as appropriate on your own channels.

NHS England publish a weekly online report each Thursday showing verified data across provider organisations including all hospital trusts. You can access the latest reports [here](#). These include **staff absences, 111 data, urgent and emergency care sitrep, ambulance performance and discharges.**



1. General practice and primary care update:

Dental

Data: Of 353 practices, approx. 9% of practices (33) are feeling significantly challenged and 42% (148) are feeling challenged but coping. 7 of 353 (2%) did not submit. This is similar to last week with minor improvements. We will share this figure weekly and note the change from last week.

Practices continue to report challenges recruiting to vacant post for dentists, dental nurses and dental therapists. Staff sickness is also a particular issue, affecting dental nurse capacity.

General practice

Practices are still feeling pressure although this has reduced by a few percentage points this week. Primary care is anticipating being extra busy during periods of industrial action and are working with colleagues from hospital and ambulance services to ensure appropriate processes are in place for patients to be seen by the right service.

Data: when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Greater Manchester introduced a 'pulse check' designed as a temperature check of current demand and pressures facing general practice who self-declare their current status by indicating low to normal demand rising to significantly increased demand and critical. **Of 421 practices declaring this week, 28.98% (122) are feeling significant / extreme increase in demand.** This is lower than last week.

Optometry

Data: Of 259 practices, 2% (5) are feeling significantly challenged and 34% (87) are feeling challenged but coping. Of the 259, 2% (5) are closed and 11% (28) did not submit. This is the same as last week.

Pharmacy

Data: Of 654 practices, 3% (22) are feeling significantly challenged and 27% (176) are feeling challenged but coping. Of the 654, 10% (65) did not submit. These figures are the same as last week.

Community pharmacies continue to report pressures relating to staff shortages and sickness.

2. Urgent and emergency care:

Hospital bed occupancy continues to remain persistently high. The number of beds across Greater Manchester fluctuates according to patient need, demand for services, planned care



requirements and staffing. It is important to note that although bed occupancy is consistently high, the people in beds change as discharges take place throughout the day. Work is underway to reduce the length of stay of patients who are in hospital for a prolonged period for non-medical or therapeutic reasons.

Data: As of 2 February, hospital bed occupancy is around 97%, with 484 Covid-positive patients (including East Cheshire). There are 92 people in ‘general and acute’ hospital beds with flu and 9 in ‘critical care’ beds. This is a significant reduction on the week prior.

Discharge

Data: As of 30 January 2023, there were 908 people medically fit for discharge in hospital. On 31 January 2023, there were 877 admissions to hospital and 826 discharges from hospital. We will share these figures weekly.

Once people no longer need dedicated hospital care, being at home, or a facility such as a care home, is the best place to continue to recover. Delays in discharging patients who are medically fit can also add further pressure to the system. We are working together with our local authority and voluntary sector partners to get people out of hospital as soon as is appropriate and ensuring that they have the necessary support in place at home.

To help us improve the flow of patients through our hospitals, we are asking friends and family to provide support to loved ones who are ready to leave hospital - this could be transport, stocking their home with food and being available if they need you. More advice can be found [here](#).

3. Industrial action:

This Monday (6th) and Tuesday (7th), nurses at the **Christie NHS Foundation Trust, Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust** and **Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust** (all hospitals) will go on strike.

Ambulance workers from the GMB and Unite Unions affecting **North West Ambulance Service** will be taking industrial action on Monday (6th), with further strikes planned by staff from Unison union on Friday (10th). A number of additional days of industrial action are planned for the rest of February and in March.

Physiotherapists from **Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust** and **Stockport NHS Foundation Trust** are striking on Thursday (9th). Physios have agreed to staff life and limb critical services, which are mainly emergency on-call respiratory (breathing) services with most other services and appointments affected.

Derogations, known as exemptions, provided to a member or service from taking part in strike action are made between employers and unions to ensure both safe staffing levels and which services are exempt from strike action. Some services may be cancelled to maintain staffing



levels.

The NHS will continue to do everything it can to go ahead with planned procedures – especially for patients in greatest clinical need – and will contact you if an appointment needs to be rescheduled. If you have not been contacted, please attend your appointment as planned.

Local NHS services will also keep their websites and social media accounts up to date with information about local service disruption – so please check before you travel.

- ✚ We are putting plans into place to limit disruption to patients as much as possible.
- ✚ We ask the public for their support by only calling 999 if it is a medical or mental health emergency - when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. Ambulances will still be able to respond in these situations, but this may only be where there is an immediate risk to life.
- ✚ There will be fewer ambulances on the roads during industrial action, with the NHS prioritising those with life-threatening needs.
- ✚ Patients should take advice from 111/999 call-handlers on whether there are circumstances where it is suitable for them to make their own way to hospital.
- ✚ The NHS is also asking the public to play their part by taking simple steps during industrial action to look after themselves, loved ones and checking in on vulnerable family members and neighbours.
- ✚ During industrial action affecting ambulance workers, NHS 111 call centres will have fewer staff and longer call response times are expected. For this reason, people are advised to seek help from NHS 111 online unless their call relates to a child under 5 or they do not have internet access.
- ✚ Hospital inpatients will be informed if their care will be impacted on a ward-by-ward basis by the staff involved in delivering their care.
- ✚ We have created [a dedicated webpage for the public to get information on the industrial strike action](#).

4. Flu and Vaccinations:

- ✚ Covid-19 and flu are still circulating, and if you're older, have an underlying health condition or you're pregnant they are more likely to make you seriously ill.
- ✚ If you're eligible, make sure to protect yourself and the people around you by getting your vaccine.
- ✚ The NHS in Greater Manchester is encouraging anyone who still needs a Covid booster vaccination to come forward as soon as possible. The message comes as the offer to take up a booster comes to an end on February 12.



- ✚ This follows advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that the offer of either an ‘initial booster dose’ (open to anyone aged 16 to 49 not considered at risk since December 2021), or ‘autumn booster dose’ (open to anyone over 50 or those under 50 at risk since September 2022) should come to an end.
- ✚ This means that Sunday, February 12 will be the last chance for anyone who has been invited for a Covid booster to take up their offer, until future campaigns are agreed by the JCVI and Government. At the moment, people who have yet to have their first or second doses of the vaccine can continue to access their jabs.
- ✚ More information here: [‘Now’s the time to grab your jab’ as booster programme set to pause | Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership \(gmintegratedcare.org.uk\)](https://www.gmintegratedcare.org.uk/news/now-s-the-time-to-grab-your-jab-as-booster-programme-set-to-pause).
- ✚ To book a Covid-19 booster before February 12, see here: [Book or manage a coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/covid-19/vaccination).
- ✚ There is plenty of flu vaccine available, and we would encourage people to contact their GP surgery to book an appointment. Protect yourself and the people around you by getting your Covid-19 autumn booster and flu booster vaccinations, completely free at a centre near you. Find out if you are eligible for a vaccine here: [Get My Jab | Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership \(gmintegratedcare.org.uk\)](https://www.gmintegratedcare.org.uk/get-my-jab) and book [here](#).

Data:

54.7% of people eligible have now had their Covid-19 Autumn Booster. 76.7% of adults and 19.1% of children have received at least two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine.

54.1% of people eligible have now had their **flu** vaccine. *[97.6% of practices reported figures this week]

5. Useful information:

- ✚ Parents and carers of young children can find help to stay safe and healthy this winter with a [new handy online guide](#). The booklet is part of the NHS Greater Manchester ‘**Get to Know Where To Go**’ campaign. It is packed full of tips and information on how to keep little ones healthy, what to do if they become unwell, and the best place to go for expert advice and help. With many families facing the challenge of rising costs this winter, it also includes details on how to find a food bank and where to go with money worries. The booklet was developed by the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Clinical Network and Communications and Engagement Team.
- ✚ Advice on staying well this winter can be found here: [NHS - Get to know where to go \(gmintegratedcare.org.uk\)](https://www.gmintegratedcare.org.uk/news/get-to-know-where-to-go) and [How to stay well in winter - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health-well-being/winter). Support for if you are affected by the cost-of-living crisis can be found here: [Helping Hand - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/helping-hand).



- ✚ 10GM, has produced a [list](#) of home from hospital services across Greater Manchester, which provide support such as transport, prescription collection, food supplies and mental health support to patients who have just been discharged from hospital:
- ✚ The Greater Manchester Ageing Hub has partnered with charity, Independent Age, to produce this [booklet](#) bringing together key information for older people on cost of living support with messages focusing on three themes - ‘**stay warm**’, ‘**stay safe**’ and ‘**stay well**’. More than 325,000 printed guides are being distributed across Greater Manchester. Look out for copies in your local pharmacy to get tips on how to keep well this winter.
- ✚ [While You Wait](#) has information for people waiting for planned hospital treatment including for staff. People can find advice on how to manage their physical and mental health while they wait.

Media statement and shareable content:

On industrial action, Mark Fisher, chief executive, NHS Greater Manchester said:

“The NHS in Greater Manchester is working extremely hard to keep services running and to keep people safe during industrial action taking place this month and next. Irrespective of industrial action taking place, it is important that people who need urgent medical care continue to come forward, especially in emergency and life-threatening cases – when someone is seriously ill or injured, or their life is at risk. The NHS will be there for you, though we ask once again that you use services wisely, to ensure those who need it most get the care they need.

“Anyone not facing an emergency who cannot wait to speak to a GP can find the best options for their needs via NHS 111 Online at 111.nhs.uk in the first instance, unless the issue concerns a child under 5, when they should call 111. Lots of illnesses can also be managed safely at home, or with a trip to a local pharmacist.

“The NHS will continue to do everything it can to go ahead with planned procedures – especially for patients in greatest clinical need – and will contact you if an appointment needs to be rescheduled. This may be by telephone so do pick up even if you do not recognise the number, and check for messages. If you have not been contacted, please attend your appointment as planned.”

On vaccinations, Mark Fisher, chief executive, NHS Greater Manchester said:



“I would urge anyone who hasn’t yet taken up the offer to top up their immunity to get their Covid booster in the next couple of weeks. With early morning and late-night options, pharmacies, hospitals and community venues, there’s plenty of choice and convenience for everyone.

“I also want to thank most sincerely everyone who has worked or volunteered since the Covid vaccination programme began in December 2020. Together, you did something remarkable, and your extraordinary commitment ensured millions of vaccines were given and that our residents have widespread protection from Covid-19 and its variants.

“Our health and care organisations, their staff, countless voluntary and charity groups and organisations, and thousands of volunteers worked tirelessly to support and deliver for the public coming forward for their vaccinations. Thank you.”

For more information and potential interview requests:

Please contact gmhscp.media@nhs.net