



Greater Manchester Weekly Winter Stakeholder Briefing

Date: 1st December 2022 – issue 1

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 not just at 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.

The coming months are expected to be difficult for many across the city-region, as the costs of energy, food and other bills continue to 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 from **1. primary care, 2. urgent care and discharge, 3. elective care, 4. public advice and signposting and 5. vaccinations.** We share data to provide context to this and include some case studies. We share public guidance and signposting information and also include a statement from NHS Greater Manchester. We will create shareable content for future weeks and as a valued stakeholder, please use 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 includes **staff absences, 111 data, urgent and emergency care sitrep, ambulance performance and discharges.**



1. General practice and primary care update:

Dentistry

- ✚ There continues to be huge pressure on dental services and local dental practices. As there is no patient registration within dentistry, patients are prioritised against clinical need and priority groups such as children, people with dementia and people experiencing homelessness; regardless of whether someone has regularly seen that dentist in the past.
- ✚ When household budgets are squeezed, we know that some people put off their dental visits. That can lead to problems that are more expensive than preventive care. If people are having trouble paying for dental care, they can talk to a dentist about low-cost options or extended payment plans. More information is available on the NHS [website](#).
- ✚ With **18 – 20% of dental appointments on average estimated to be missed**, we are encouraging people to attend and if they are unable, to cancel in advance so someone else can take the appointment.

Case study: recognising the increased demand for dental care, we have developed the **Greater Manchester Access Plus Scheme**. This scheme aims to improve access and continue dental care for those who have received urgent care but who require further care and treatment within an NHS dental practice. If people need access to urgent dental care, they can use the **Greater Manchester Urgent Dental Care Service** available to all residents of Greater Manchester. This service is available 8am to 10pm every day and can be accessed by calling freephone 0333 332 3800. The service cannot provide access for routine check-ups.

General practice

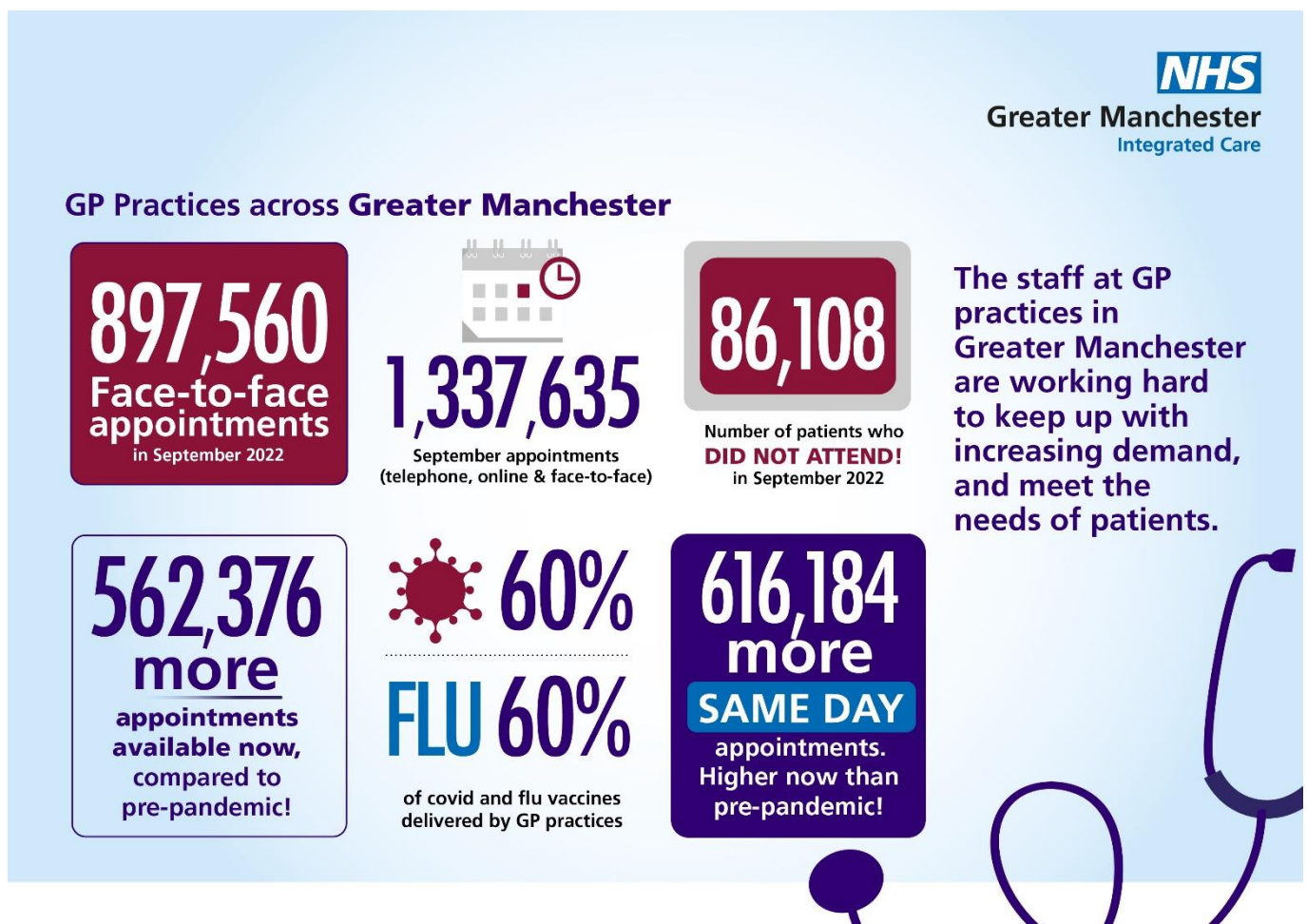
- ✚ We recognise that access to GP services is a priority. NHS Greater Manchester has commissioned extended hours services at evenings and weekends, across the city- region and we are working hard to ensure people can access care in a timely way.
- ✚ We are improving the public's access to general practice and are delivering more same day appointments than ever before which includes virtual, online consultation and telephone appointments. We always strive to meet the needs of our local population, providing choice on the type of appointment. If a patient needs a face-to-face appointment they are often seen on the same day or a day of their choice.
- ✚ The Covid-19 pandemic brought forward changes that were underway in general practice to offer greater choice and flexibility to people by vastly expanding remote and digital access to trained professionals. We know though that there are inequalities in digital access, and we are committed to ensuring people's access to care isn't affected.

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, almost 25% are feeling significant / extreme increase in demand.** We will share this figure weekly and compare the percentage change.

Infographic showing general practice level data:



Optometry

- ✚ Optometrists have a proven record providing services that mean patients get access to the care and treatment they need. Like pharmacists, many are based on the high street and are in great position to offer community-centric eyecare that is easy and convenient for all.
- ✚ **Case study:** Greater Manchester has an urgent eyecare service established during the Pandemic to provide urgent assessment, treatment or referral for sudden onset eye problems six days a week. Some optometry practices will also offer evening and Sunday appointments.



- ✚ The scheme has provided fast, safe access and a high-quality service for people. It has been successful in reducing both the number of ophthalmology attendances at emergency departments and eye-related GP appointments. We estimate that around **70 - 80% of people have avoided attending hospital or their GP practice.**

Pharmacy

- ✚ For many, community pharmacy acts as the front door to the NHS with a pharmacy within 20 minutes' walk for most people living in Greater Manchester. Every week in Greater Manchester, approximately **45, 000 people seek advice about symptoms** from a pharmacist, with **65, 000 consultations undertaken on average every week.** 30, 000 additional GP appointments would be required without pharmacists.
- ✚ Pharmacies offer a [new medicines service](#) to support people with certain conditions use medicine safely and to best effect; blood pressure monitoring; Hepatitis C testing; stop smoking support and can also dispose of old and unwanted medicines safely.
- ✚ **Case study:** more than 400 pharmacies in Greater Manchester are now playing a vital role in preventing cardiovascular disease through blood pressure checks on people aged 40 plus and monitoring their symptoms. Depending on the results, people are then referred to their GP for appropriate management and / or further assessment; or receive lifestyle advice instead.
- ✚ Community pharmacies continue to support the Covid-19 and Flu vaccination programme. Over 100 pharmacies are delivering life-saving vaccinations this year.

2. Urgent and emergency care:

Longer waits in emergency departments (A&E) demonstrate the extremely high levels of demand being faced in our hospitals, on ambulance services and for social care. This is a nationally recognised issue, and we are more committed than ever to working together as system to ensure people get the help they need, as quickly and safely as possible in the face of continuing demand. Patients in emergency departments are always seen in order of clinical priority.

Case study: staff are working hard to ensure people receive the right care in the right setting, ensuring vital hospital beds are there for those who need them. Same-day emergency care (SDEC) units provide care for emergency patients who would otherwise be admitted to hospital. Under this care model, patients presenting at hospital with relevant conditions can be rapidly assessed, diagnosed and treated without being admitted to a ward, and if clinically safe to do so, will go home the same day their care is provided.

Data: Hospital bed occupancy is around 93%, with 8% of beds occupied with Covid-positive patients. Paediatric beds remain pressured with high numbers of children with bronchiolitis or RSV. Information on signs, symptoms and support [here](#).



Discharge

Nobody wants to be in hospital for longer than is needed and recovery at home or in a community setting can often be better for people. However, discharge can be a complex area with considerations needing to be taken into ensuring that the appropriate support and care is in place once the patient leaves the hospital, as well as taking onboard the wishes of the patient and their family.

Delays in discharging medically fit patients can also add further pressure to the system, so we are working together with our local authority and volunteer sector partners to get people out of hospital as soon as is appropriate.

Data: As of 28/11, there were 931 people medically fit for discharge in hospital. On 28/11, there were 825 admissions to hospital and 838 discharges from hospital. We will share these figures weekly.

Industrial action:

- ✚ Nurses, and all are staff are valued and integral to the NHS.
- ✚ We have tried and tested contingency plans in place, including a system of mutual aid, to mitigate risks to patient safety and manage any disruption, including industrial action.
- ✚ Industrial action will inevitably limit what care the NHS can provide and the priority will be to maintain urgent and emergency services, such as A&E, emergency surgery and urgent elective care.
- ✚ Hospitals impacted by industrial action will contact those affected as soon as possible. **If people are not contacted then they should assume their appointment is continuing as planned.** There is no need for people to contact the hospital or GP practice for this information.
- ✚ We would urge anyone with health concerns to continue to come forward for help and treatment in the usual way, using their local emergency department (A&E) only for serious, life-threatening illnesses or injuries.
- ✚ The trade unions' dispute is with the government as NHS pay rates are set nationally. We want to see a resolution as soon as possible to the strikes.

3. Elective care:

- ✚ In Greater Manchester, there are approximately **535, 000** people waiting on the waiting list (consultant-led referral to treatment pathways, includes outpatients as well as operations).
- ✚ The top three specialties with the most people waiting are:
 - Gynaecology



- Ear, nose and throat
 - Trauma and orthopaedics
- ✚ Greater Manchester is one of the areas hardest hit by Covid-19 and this has impacted on our speed of recovery. Reducing the waiting list backlog continues to be a priority for health and care organisations in the region.
 - ✚ Providers across Greater Manchester are working together to manage the total waiting list and are providing mutual aid and identifying where there is capacity to treat people as quickly as possible.
 - ✚ This collaborative approach has proven to be successful in our management of the longest waiters, meeting the national target to treat all those people who had waited 104 weeks or more (unless they chose to wait longer or had to wait longer for medical reasons).
 - ✚ We are using this approach to focus on reducing the wait for people who have waited 78 weeks or more.
 - ✚ [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.
 - ✚ Through our accessibility toolbar you can translate the content on While You Wait into over 100 languages, hear audio, change the colours, font type and size to suit your needs.

Elective care initiatives:

Case study: surgical hubs are one of the initiatives being used to manage planned care waiting list backlogs. Located on existing hospital sites, surgical hubs bring together skills and expertise of staff under one roof. They will focus mainly on providing high volume low complexity surgery and will help to reduce waiting times for some of the most common procedures.

The additional funding will be used to increase theatre and diagnostic services at Rochdale Infirmary, Leigh Infirmary and Trafford General Hospital. This will create new jobs and enable more procedures to be undertaken. The Christie NHS Foundation Trust has also received funding to increase ward capacity for people across Greater Manchester requiring complex cancer surgery.

People in Greater Manchester are already benefitting from treatment at surgical hubs for orthopaedics and children's surgery. Over 1, 000 patients in Greater Manchester have been treated at local orthopaedic surgical hubs.

4. Useful information:

- ✚ The NHS will be here for the public this winter. Whilst this winter might be tougher than usual for people, there are some practical things people can do to try and keep well.



- ✚ These include to wrap up well; keep your home warm where possible even for short periods of time – there is lots of advice available to people struggling with high energy costs; keep a well-stocked medicine cabinet if you can; eat as well as you can; keep in touch with family and friends; and to move and exercise if able to do so.
- ✚ Advice on staying well this winter can be found here: [How to stay well in winter - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) and 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://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk).
- ✚ We ask the public to use the right service – use [111](https://111.nhs.uk) to guide you if you aren't sure, take up their [flu and Covid jabs](https://www.nhs.uk) if eligible and even if fighting fit; and to look after their health this winter. Make sure you get your prescription medicines on time, ordering in advance, before your pharmacy or GP practice closes for holidays. And, if you've been prescribed antibiotics or any other medication, make sure you take them as directed.

Living with a long-term health condition:

Living with a health condition can be challenging. Many of us have a condition with symptoms which we need to keep a close eye on. It's important to know what feels normal for you and to be aware of changes to your health. If you're noticing stronger, more frequent or different symptoms, or if you just don't feel quite right, this can be a sign that you might need additional help with your long-term condition. If you think something has changed with your health, don't just ignore it, please talk to your GP who can advise on what's best. Speak to your GP practice and make an appointment.

5. Vaccinations:

- ✚ Covid-19 and Flu are about, and if you're older, have an underlying health condition or you're pregnant they are more likely to make you seriously ill.
- ✚ Even milder symptoms can make you feel pretty unwell, and have to miss out on work, education or social plans.
- ✚ 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 \(gminegratedcare.org.uk\)](https://gminegratedcare.org.uk) and book [here](#).

Data: 50% of people eligible have now had their Covid-19 Autumn Booster.



Media statement:

Mark Fisher, chief executive of NHS Greater Manchester:

“We know winter is a challenging time for the health and care system though the reality is both that there has been very little let up in the pressure all year round, and that we spend a lot of time preparing in advance to ease pressures where we can.

“Our plans this year include opening more beds when possible; a number of programmes with the voluntary sector to support people to stay well at home, maintain independence and give support after a stay in hospital; more capacity in the form of virtual wards; increasing the number of 111 call handlers and the use of additional roles across general practice and other settings.

“The public want to feel reassured that their NHS is here for them this winter and can support them when they are unwell. It is and the public can help and do their bit too. We are urging the public to use the right service – use 111 to guide you if you aren’t sure, take up flu and Covid jabs if eligible and even if fighting fit; and to look after their health this winter.

“As we head into winter, I want to our staff across the health and care system for their ongoing hard work and commitment.”

For more information and potential interview requests:

Please contact gmhscp.media@nhs.net.