

Wednesday 4 October 2023



## NHS Frimley: Accident & Emergency Waiting Times/Pressures

### Purpose of report:

This report is to inform the committee of improvement delivered in the delivery of Emergency Department (ED aka A&E) at Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey.

### 1. Background

1.1 The ED at Frimley Park Hospital is one of two EDs managed by Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust (FHFT) and it sees c.117,000 patients per year.

1.2 Nationally the aim is to see, treat and discharge/admit patients from ED within 4 hours.

1.3 However, in May 2019, FHFT were one of 14 NHS Hospital Trusts selected to take part in a national field test of proposed new Urgent & Emergency Care Clinical Review of Standards (UEC CRS). As part of the pilot reporting 4 hour performance would cease and, instead, field test organisations would monitor the following metrics:

Service	Measure
Pre-hospital	Response times for ambulances
	Reducing avoidable trips (conveyance rates) to Emergency Departments by 999 ambulances
	Proportion of contacts via NHS 111 that receive clinical input
A&E	Percentage of Ambulance Handovers within 15 minutes
	Time to Initial Assessment – percentage within 15 minutes
	Average (mean) time in Department – non-admitted patients
Hospital	Average (mean) time in Department – admitted patients
	Clinically Ready to Proceed
Whole System	Patients spending more than 12 hours in A&E
	Critical Time Standards

1.4 Significant work was undertaken at the field test sites in order to 'remove' all traces of the 4 hour standard and replace with the CRS metrics including amending all operational dashboards as well as internal and external reports.

1.5 At the end of 2022, NHS England made the decision to terminate the field test. Consequently, FHFT were instructed to return to reporting against the 4 hour standard with effect from 15th May 2023. The new national target being for Trusts to ensure that by March 2024, 76% of ED patients were seen within 4 hours. FHFT's performance against this standard was 34% for December 2022.

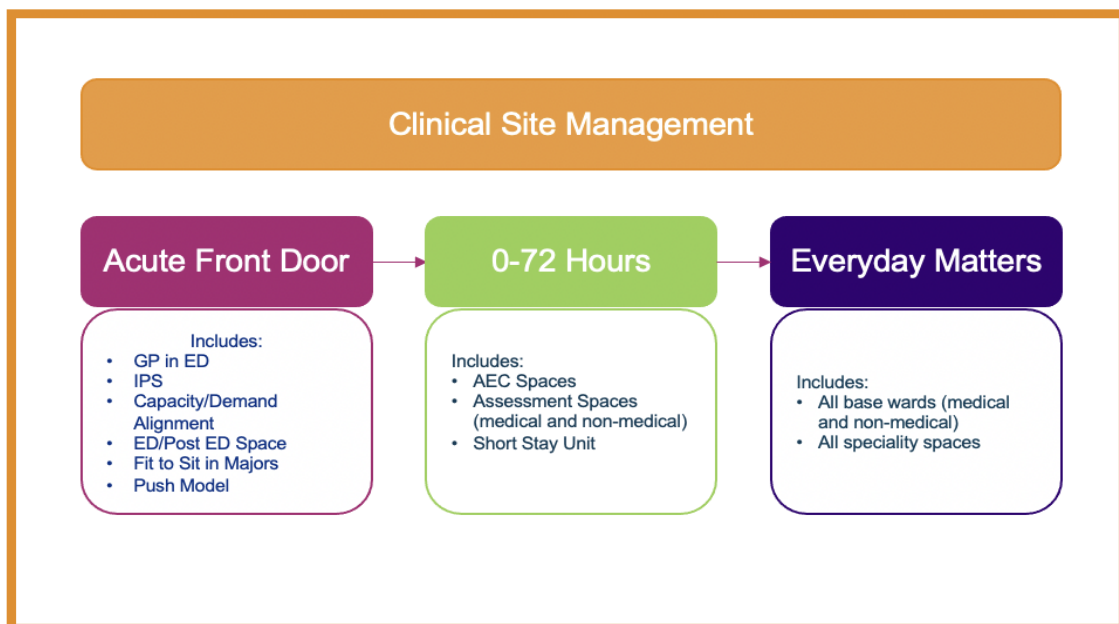
1.6 Having spent the best part of four years working without the 4 hour standard, the amount of work required for FHFT to bring it back in to play could not be underestimated. Many staff working within Urgent & Emergency Care had joined after May 2019 and therefore had never worked under the 4 hour standard. Staff would need an extensive programme of retraining.

1.7 There was also a need for the performance to significantly improve.

## 2. Improvement Programme

2.1 From 1 December 2022 FHFT worked with an improvement consultant to lead the development, delivery and oversight of a new improvement programme, with the overall aim of increasing the proportion of patients at ED seen within 4 hours.

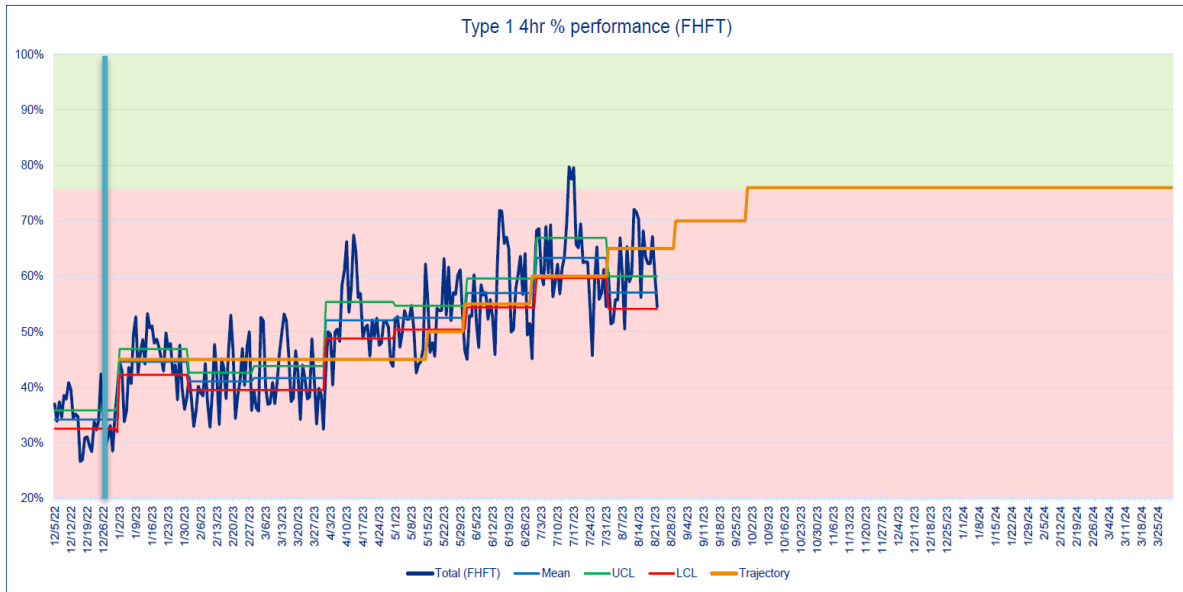
2.2 The FHFT improvement programme was divided into 4 work streams aligned to the flow of a patient's journey:



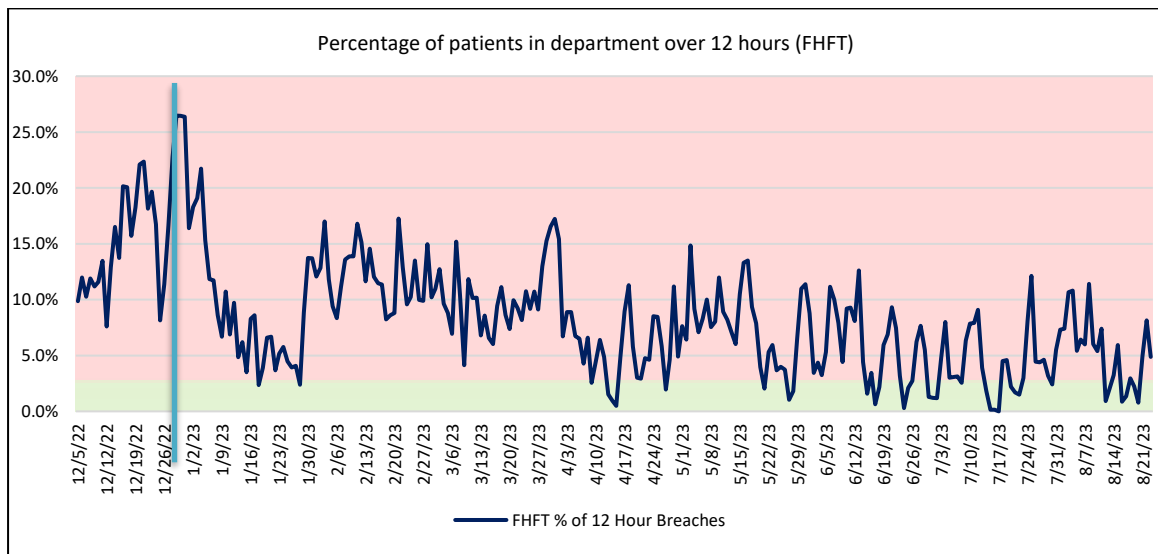
- 2.3 In order to achieve improvement, the Trust (including clinicians and managers) needed to acknowledge challenges with the existing processes and services, not just in ED, but in all areas of a patients journey.
- 2.4 Secondly, the Trust established a suite of remedial actions needed to be delivered in order to rectify these challenges. Again, full clinical and managerial engagement was necessary.
- 2.5 The full clinical and managerial engagement is essential for any programme wishing to be sustainable and ensure that teams that deliver care to patients are bought into the changes required.
- 2.6 Thirdly, a robust delivery plan with grip and rigour was required in order to ensure delivery of these remedial actions. This plan was divided into the aforementioned work streams.
- 2.7 Finally, a dashboard was required to monitor the impact of the remedial actions being undertaken. This included smaller metrics directly impacted on by individual improvement actions, as well as an overarching metric of delivering the 4 hour standard.
- 2.8 In fact, a trajectory was set for the new 4 hour standard with the Trust attempting to reach the national target of 76% in October 2023 – 5 months earlier than the national ambition.
- 2.9 The comprehensive improvement programme commenced at the end of December 2022.

### **3. Performance**

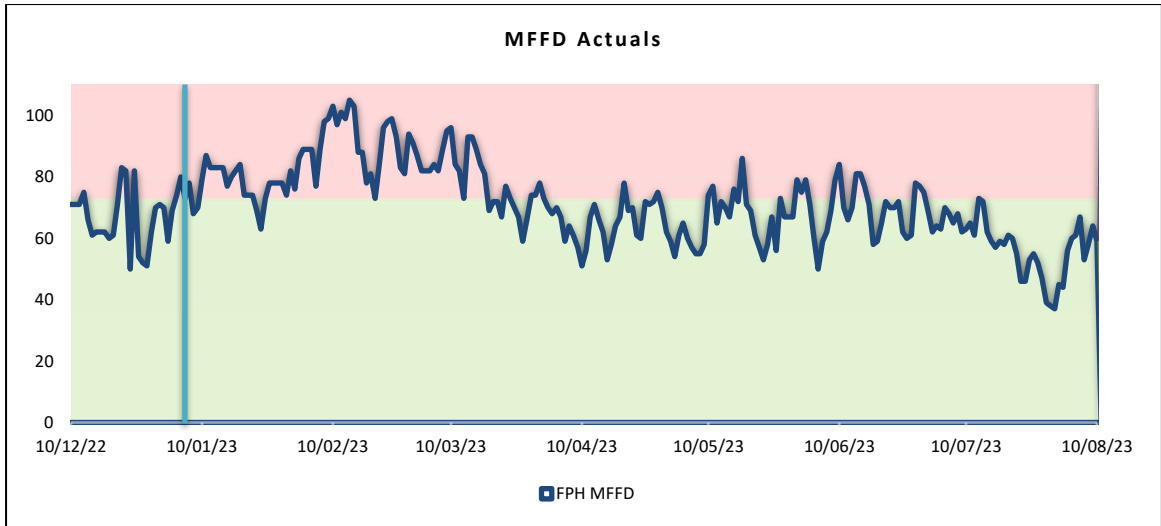
- 3.1 Since its initiation in December 2022, the improvement programme has made good progress towards the required achievement of the 4 hour standard as evidenced in the graph below. By the end of August 2023, the system's performance was 67.5% against a trajectory of 65%.



3.2 In addition, further performance improvements had been made. The proportion of patients waiting in ED in excess of 12 hours had fallen to less than 2.5% in August.

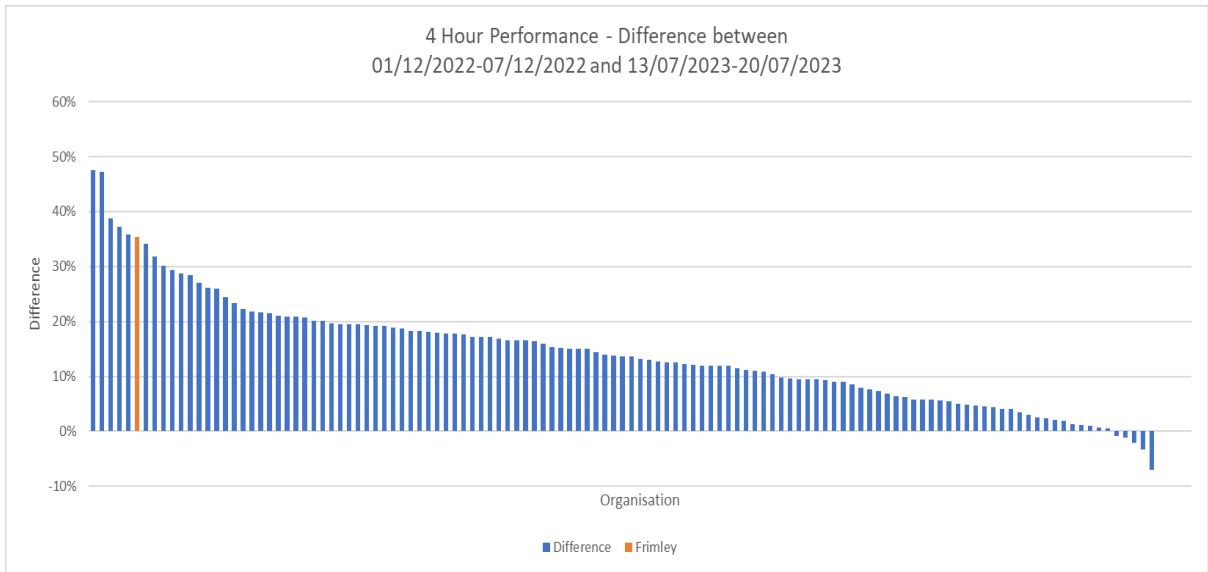


3.3 The proportion of admitted patients at the Frimley Park Hospital site that were medically fit for discharge had also reduced to lower than 75 – a key number in the FHFT ambition to ensure that there are than no more than 150 admitted patients across two acute hospital sites that are medically fit for discharge.



3.4 Throughout the programme, delivery has been made more challenging by the complexities of dealing with Industrial Action by both Junior Doctors and Consultants, with further action(s) expected over the coming months.

3.5 In making this progress, FHFT have become one of the most improved Trusts in the country against the national 4 hour standard as evidence below. (It is worth noting that the 5 Trusts making larger improvement are all significantly smaller Trusts with significantly lower demand on their EDs.)



**4. Continuation**

4.1 On 1 August 2023, an external consultancy company was appointed to FHFT, to further support rapid improvement in performance.

- 4.2 A full stock-take of improvement plans, improvement actions, timescales and governance is being undertaken; and the reconfiguration of acute medical and surgical assessment units and Same Day Emergency Care (SDECs) is planned.
- 4.3 Quality and timely board rounds are continuing to be rolled out across the Trust, with Regional clinical leadership supporting their delivery.
- 4.4 From the previous plan there are now twelve wards that have received focussed support to improve how they operate resulting in improved pre-11:00 discharges, pre-11:00 prescriptions To Take Out (TTOs), use of the Discharge Lounge, and improved recording of Estimated Discharge Dates (EDDs). This is helping to improve flow out of ED and through the hospital, as well as reduce overall Length of Stay. This will continue to be rolled out.
- 4.5 A new system activity dashboard known as “SHREWD” was introduced in late July 2023, and while there have been technical issues integrating with EPIC (the clinical system at the Trust), these are expected to be resolved by the end of September 2023. Training for all users is progressing well; and once the SHREWD system is embedded, total system performance will be monitored in real time, enabling the system’s timely response to localised pressure in ED.
- 4.6 In July 2023, it was confirmed that the Urgent Care Centre at Brants Bridge in Bracknell could officially be designated an Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC), meaning that its Minor Injury activity can be included in Frimley’s system performance against the 4 hour standard.
- 4.7 Finally, NHS Frimley is currently exploring ‘Alternatives to ED’ (AtEDs) that might support further improvement to 4 hour performance and mitigate UEC Demand.

## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 The nationally mandated requirement to resume reporting of Emergency Department activity against the 4 hour standard has brought a challenging set of operational issues for Frimley Health Foundation Trust (FHFT) to work through, both at Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey, as well as at the second site at Wexham Park in Berkshire.
- 5.2 The backdrop of intermittent Industrial Action throughout 2023 has contributed to the challenge.
- 5.3 Nevertheless, FHFT have made huge progress to delivery of the new 76% 4 hour standard, delivering 67.5% in August and being one of the most improved Trusts in the country in doing so.

5.4 This continued trajectory of improvement will stand the system in good stead, as it approaches what is expected to be a challenging Winter 2023/24.

## **6. Recommendations**

7.1 The Committee is requested to note both the operational challenges facing the Emergency Department (ED) at Frimley Park and the wider Frimley system, and the huge progress made through 2023, as set out in this paper.

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