

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) and Patient Flow Update
Meeting Date: 17 June 2026

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update from NHS partners on the performance of Worcestershire's Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) system and patient flow arrangements during the winter period (October 2025 to March 2026).

The report focused on:

- how effectively patients move through hospitals and community services, helping to reduce delays, improve patient experience, and relieve pressure on emergency departments and ambulance services.
- Members were advised that the health and care system continues to experience significant demand, particularly within emergency departments and acute hospital services.
- However, a range of improvement programmes involving the NHS, local authorities, community services and ambulance providers have contributed to better patient flow and discharge arrangements. These initiatives include expanded Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) services, improved discharge planning, greater use of virtual wards, enhanced community support, and stronger coordination between hospital and social care teams.
- Reducing unnecessary hospital admissions remains a major priority. Efforts are being made to ensure patients receive treatment in the most appropriate setting, including primary care, community services and home-based care where clinically appropriate. Improved access to same-day services and integrated care pathways are helping to prevent avoidable admissions and reduce pressure on hospital beds.
- A key focus of the report was the importance of timely discharge from hospital. Delayed discharges can contribute to overcrowding in emergency departments and increased ambulance handover delays.
- NHS partners reported ongoing work to improve discharge processes, including earlier discharge planning, weekend discharge arrangements, increased support for patients returning home, and closer collaboration with adult social care services. Previous initiatives have already demonstrated improvements in discharge rates and reductions in average hospital length of stay.
- A more integrated approach to bed management and patient flow. This will aim to ensure patients move smoothly between acute hospitals, community hospitals, rehabilitation services and home-based care, enabling resources to be used more efficiently and reducing delays across the system.

Key Messages

- Continued high demand on urgent and emergency care services.
- Improved patient flow remains critical to reducing hospital and ambulance delays.
- Greater use of Same Day Emergency Care, virtual wards and community services is helping avoid unnecessary admissions.
- Ongoing work is improving hospital discharge processes and reducing length of stay.
- Better integration between NHS organisations and social care is supporting more efficient use of beds and resources.
- Further improvement is required to ensure resilience during future winter pressures.

This report demonstrated that while Worcestershire's health and care system has made measurable progress in managing patient flow and urgent care pressures, sustained partnership working and continued service transformation will be essential to meet growing healthcare demand in the years ahead.