

How have we helped to improve Outpatient services for people in Kent?



Making your voice count

Outpatients in East and West Kent

The story so far

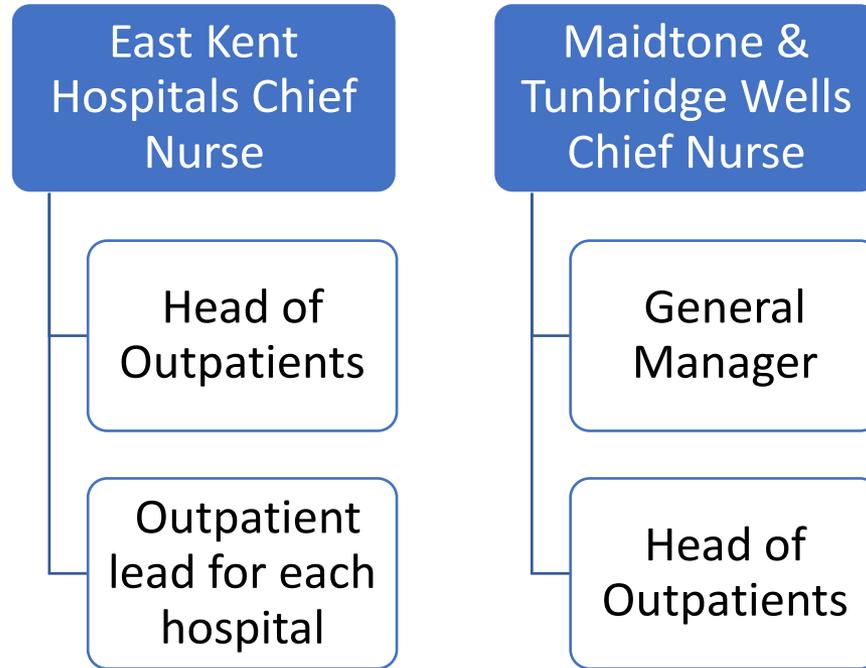
You - the people of Kent - regularly tell us about your experience of using outpatient clinics...we hear the good and the not so good

In 2016, we visited Outpatients at Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Hospitals. We also revisited Outpatient Departments at all 3 East Kent Hospitals

You told us about problems with signage, delays to appointments, temperature and layout of the waiting rooms.

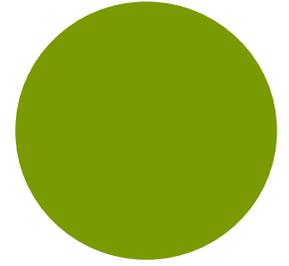
Healthwatch Kent has been working to *make your voice count*

We took your feedback to the decision makers



Our report detailing everything we heard from patients was published on our website and shared with the public as well as Councillors and stakeholders.

Reaching decision makers



In East Kent

We met with the Chief Nurse and the Head of Outpatients at East Kent Hospitals face to face where we discussed the findings of our report.

We also met face to face with the lead for Outpatients at all 3 East Kent Hospitals to discuss what could be done to implement our recommendations.

West Kent

Similarly, in West Kent we met with the Chief Nurse for Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Hospital Trust. She has met with the General Manager and the Head of Outpatients to discuss our report, recommendations and next steps.

What happened?

Both Trusts responded positively to our report.

Here are just some of our achievements

Kent and Canterbury Hospital

- More disabled parking is now available
- All reception staff are now trained and experienced to help patients
- Volunteers are on hand to direct people
- Support is available to help people with the self check in machines
- If clinics are running late, then information is now displayed on the screens for patients
- Patients should be waiting less for the transport service
- A new Patient Appointment System has been implemented

Buckland Hospital

- More parking is now available
- Appointment letters for patients have been reviewed
- A new sign welcoming patients to the hospital is in place
- The usage of self check machines at Buckland has increased over the last few months as reception staff have been available to support patients

Royal Victoria Hospital

- A new sign at the main entrance has been put up to help people to find the Outpatients Department
- Text message reminders which are sent to patients now also include directions
- The main reception for Outpatients is now working well and they have had positive feedback from patients. The Hospital is still hoping to make further improvements here.
- Patients now receive more than one reminder for their appointment to try and reduce the number of missed appointments
- Waiting rooms have been reconfigured to make the best use of the space available.
- A new Patient Appointment System has been implemented. This should help the Hospital to manage appointments better. They are still working on a better system for follow up appointments and overbooked clinics.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Hospitals

- The Trust have been exploring how they can improve signposting at both Hospitals. They have reviewed the existing signage and involved patients including Healthwatch
- New signs have been put up in Maidstone Hospital including wall colours to match zones, totem pole maps. Signage is being improved at Tunbridge Wells Hospital too.
- Appointment letters have been reviewed to include information about parking, transport and colour zones
- Feedback from patients and staff about the new signs has been very positive
- Staff in Outpatients have explored how they could provide more accurate waiting time information for each clinic
- To improve waiting times and prevent late running of clinics, there is now a monthly audit of clinic start and finish times
- At Maidstone the main Outpatients reception is being reorganised to make a bigger space for wheelchairs

What else have we done?

We continue to talk to patients about their experiences of using Outpatient services.

- We've spoken to 114 people through our freephone Helpline about their experience of Outpatients.
- Our volunteers regularly visit Outpatient departments to talk to patients. We've recently spoken face to face to 57 patients at Darent Valley Hospital
- We spoken to 41 patients at QEQM Hospital in Margate. We heard lots of positive comments about the caring nature of staff. We also heard the following concerns
 - Difficulties in booking appointments which were more than 3 months away.
 - Tests and scan results not always being ready for their appointments.

The Trust gave us the following response

- They acknowledged that patients can wait too long for their first appointment and they are working to address it
- They are looking in depth at the issues patients face when trying to book follow up appointments
- They are looking to address the issue about test results not being ready. They don't currently have enough diagnostic staff to manage the volume of tests
- Patients with hearing difficulties should get automated reminders about their appointments but that doesn't always happen. The Trust are looking to make sure patients are more aware of the options to receive text alerts too
- The Trust are looking to ensure patients are fully aware of who they need to contact to arrange a follow up appointments

Outpatients: What next?

What else needs to be done

We continue to share the feedback we receive about Outpatients with all Kent Hospitals to ensure they continue to hear from you and improve services

Commitments: We will continue to ensure our remaining recommendations are acted upon

Review: We will continue to hold regular sessions in Outpatients so that we can continue to hear from patients

Making your voice count

Sign up for our newsletter to receive regular updates

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