

Supporting the development of our local Emergency Department

July 2023

Emergency Department Redevelopment Engagement Session

Introduction

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove (Healthwatch) work closely with University Sussex Hospitals Trust (UHSx). We are in regular contact with their Director of Patient Experience, Engagement and Involvement, and on Monday, the 15th of May 2023, we were invited to attend an Emergency Department (ED) redevelopment stakeholder and engagement session held at the Royal Sussex County Hospital. A £48 million investment has been agreed to expand and improve the existing ED over the next four years.



This valuable joint-working is shaping key aspects of the project including accessibility and wayfinding for patients. The group will convene again and throughout the project to ensure the patient voice is influential in shaping the improvements.

- Nicole Chavaudra – Director of Patient Experience, Engagement and Involvement, UHSx



Healthwatch warmly welcomes the partnership working we have with the Trust. Invitations to join groups such as this one allows us to involve patients and community groups and represent their voices. We also invited Healthwatch Director Alistair Hignell, Fran McCabe, a Governor of UHSx, Ed Tucker from Possibility People, Nadine from Sussex Interpreting Services and Tom Lambert from the Carers Centre.

Background

Healthwatch has previously visited the department and reported that it is not fit for purpose, mainly due to the size and layout, which means that the flow of patients through the department is extremely challenging. This means patients are having to wait longer, and this can negatively impact the care they receive or their overall experience.

Healthwatch is also aware that many people are attending the ED because they cannot get support from anywhere else or are not aware of alternatives.

The objectives of the ED redevelopment are to:

- improve the environment for patients and their families,
- to make the working conditions better for staff,
- increase the overall size and
- facilitate multidisciplinary teamwork (which involves teams of individuals drawn from different disciplines who come together to support patients)

This will create a better overall experience for patients and staff.

On the day

We were shown plans for the ED redevelopment and talked through the rationales and objectives of the project.

The plans Healthwatch were shown are ambitious and will affect the whole ED. What makes them more challenging is that the ED will stay open as usual during the whole 4 years of redevelopment.

The first stage of the redevelopment

This will involve expanding the Resuscitation room (where patients with life-threatening illnesses and injuries are treated, often referred to as Resus) and the Patient Assessment and Triage (where patients are assessed to see how unwell they are and ensure they go to the right department in the ED, often referred to as PAT). They will also focus on providing more private cubicles to ensure that patients can have privacy if needed.

We were told that the next stages for the redevelopment are:

- to refine the design to ensure it meets the needs of the ED and is kept within budget
- to develop a phasing plan to ensure that the ED can continue to provide a full service throughout the redevelopment
- to conduct a workforce analysis to ensure the ED has the staff needed to run efficiently and

- to work on their communication and engagement strategy to ensure the voice of the patient is heard throughout the redevelopment process.

Healthwatch was reassured that the Trust has a specialist programme and governance team to oversee the ED redevelopment. Currently, the plans are being reviewed to ensure that they keep within the budget of £48 million. Although this budget seems high, it is quite tight for such a large overhaul, however, a generous contingency budget has been included. The plans are being tested using simulation software to ensure that the demands of each area in the ED are fully understood, as are the workforce requirements.

What we found

Healthwatch, along with the partners we invited, are pleased to be part of the ED redevelopment process and offer ideas and insight from a patient perspective. Comments made included:



"It is very exciting to know a new A and E department will be at the RSCH in 3 years and that patients are also being involved in its design. The current A and E remains overcrowded with staff providing good care despite its restrictions. Whilst we are waiting for the new department, it's welcome that there is a continuing focus on improving the current service and reducing waits: which will improve the experience of patients and staff."

- Fran McCabe - Governor of UHSx



"The most ambitious new hospital build of the 21st century has opened its doors in our great city. The reason why the NHS has managed to survive - even without Covid - is because of the quality, care and extra-mile compassion of its front-line staff. Those people are, by and large, still there. Brighton is often cited as one of the best places to live and deep in our hearts we know it. Most of us will have chosen to live here and be grateful for all that the city has to offer us. The hospital is yet another jewel in Brighton's crown."

- Alistair Hignell - Healthwatch director





“From a patient’s point of view, I would say very clear wayfinding/signage/directions with possible flowcharts/explanations/illustrations is going to be important, so when you get there, you know exactly where you need to go or be and what the process is for progressing through the ED and receiving care. Also, better flow/arrangements for traffic and pedestrians in the outside area.”

- Ed Tucker – Possibility People



We then had a tour of the ED at the County Hospital. We observed that the department was overcrowded, with challenging patient flow. It was also evident that the staff were doing their very best to look after patients in a difficult environment.

The response from the partners we invited was of overwhelming support for the NHS staff, who are doing their very best to look after patients in a very busy ED.

We were also reminded that the ED is always open and never turns anyone away.

Here’s a summary of what we found out from the session:

- The redevelopment of the ED will increase its current floor space by 50%.
- The ED, as it currently stands, requires improvement. Currently, 41.5% of patients are seen within a target of 4 hours (May 2023). The Government’s recent [Delivery Plan for Recovering Urgent and Emergency Care Services](#) sets out an ambition for 76% of patients being admitted, transferred or discharged within four hours by March 2024.
- One of the main problems facing the ED is the physical environment. Healthwatch has routinely reported our findings about the environment to the Trust, most recently in [2022](#), and these latest plans show their commitment to making patient-focused improvements, tackling issues we have identified such as:

- Overcrowding.
- A lack of privacy in triage rooms and in corridors.
- A lack of refreshments, or comfort breaks.
- Lack of communication about where people are in the waiting-to-be-seen list.
- The biggest challenge for the redevelopment is keeping the department running whilst simultaneously redeveloping it.
- Here's a [link](#) to read more about the redevelopment.

What next

We will continue to engage with the Trust to ensure we are involved in the ongoing plans to redevelop the ED. We have already been asked to join a regular Steering Group and it is planned to meet again in September. One of the things on the agenda will be ensuring that there is clear signage in the new ED, so it is clear to patients where they are going and where they need to go.

If you have any questions, stories good or bad please let us know by contacting Clary at clary@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk.