

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust submission to the Southwark Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission, March 2022.

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is one of the busiest and biggest Trusts in the country serving an inner-city population of 1.3 million people and acting as a tertiary referral centre for millions more.

This submission below sets out how the Trust, and in particular our Denmark Hill site - which cares for the people of Southwark - has managed the most recent surge of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 and the next steps in recovering from the impact of the pandemic.

Operational recovery from COVID-19

The impact of Omicron

Over the Christmas period and in the early months of 2022, our services and staff were managing the surge of patients presenting with the Omicron variant of COVID-19 as well as the high numbers of staff sickness and isolation that occurred because of the transmissibility of the strain. Despite these ongoing challenges, our staff have shown outstanding professionalism and agility to provide the very best care to all.

As at 15 March 2022, our current Trust position is:

- Trust wide: 21 patients in critical care, 156 patients in general and acute beds.
- King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill site: 18 patients in critical care, 85 patients in general and acute beds.

Across our hospitals, including our Denmark Hill site, we have stood down the gold and silver command and control structures, used for rapid decision making and escalation. We continue to actively monitor the local and national COVID-19 situation so that we are ready to respond to any emerging trends.

Elective recovery

We are continuing to make progress with our elective recovery. While some elective care was paused during previous waves, we are now carrying out planned elective care at all our sites and returning to face-to-face appointments where clinically appropriate.

Last year our waiting lists dropped from 8,000 to 1,000, for people who had been waiting longer than one year for treatment. We are routinely exceeding 100% of our business-as-usual pre-pandemic baseline (2019/2020) for outpatients and day case surgery.

We are also increasing our capacity, both in terms of staffing and facilities, to be able to continue to reduce waiting times and see and treat more people across Southwark and South East London. At King's College Hospital in Denmark Hill, we have opened two new theatres in neurosurgery which will enable us to carry out an extra 750 neurosurgical procedures this year. In radiology, we have purchased two new scanners which are quicker than the equipment they have replaced, and we now have more scanners in total across all our sites. This team are also running a seven-day service to scan and diagnose more people, at an earlier stage. We are mid-way through construction for a new outpatient's facility which will house 48 consultation rooms and eight procedure rooms which will be open to patients in the summer.

Living with COVID – the UK Government's roadmap for recovery

Following the Prime Minister's announcement setting out the roadmap for living with COVID on 21 February, King's has taken time to understand the full implications of the relaxation of measures including social distancing on our patients, services and staff.

What the changes mean for the NHS

Many of our infection prevention and control measures will remain in place, in some format, so that we can protect our patients, visitors and staff working across our sites. Face masks continue to remain mandatory as soon as people enter our buildings and appropriate PPE will be required on wards. For red pathways – on COVID-19 positive inpatient wards for example – staff will continue to be provided with FFP3 masks and eye protection to provide them with the highest level of protection against the transmission of COVID-19. For all other interactions with patients and visitors, staff will be required to wear surgical masks – with eye protection being required to carry out some tasks and procedures. There are no changes to these policies – they remain the same as the policies we put in place throughout the pandemic.

It is of paramount importance to the Trust that all our staff, patients and visitors' safety is prioritised. We will be continuing to take a cautious, risk assessed approach to all infection prevention and control decisions which are made across the Trust.

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