

Innovative partnership sees ambulance handover times almost half

Ambulance handover times at United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust have almost halved thanks to an innovative partnership.

Latest figures show the average handover time has fallen from more than 50 minutes at the start of the project in March to 26 minutes in June. At the start of the project the Trust was among the worst performing in the country for ambulance handover times.

Funding from NHS Improvement enabled ULHT to benefit from the expertise and experience of SSG Health, a team who support NHS organisations to improve and sustain operational performance.

By working closely alongside EMAS and SSG Health we have seen massive improvements at both Lincoln County Hospital and Pilgrim Hospital, Boston.

These encouraging results have been achieved through several measures. One of these is the introduction of a pre-handover practitioner role in Boston to manage the incoming ambulances (these are posts funded by the Trust and are filled by trained ambulance technicians or ambulance paramedics). Other measures include an audit system to support compliance with the handover process and most recently nursing staff recording the handovers taking place using iPads.

Following the success of the pre-handover practitioners at Pilgrim hospital the teams are now looking to introduce the role at Lincoln.

Despite the number of patients visiting our A&Es being significantly above anticipated levels at all of our sites and a lot higher than the same time last year, performance on ambulance handovers in June showed some of the best performance since early 2017.

The number of patients arriving by ambulance has increased across the Trust by more than 100 every week, however data from prior to the launch of the project showed that even with fewer conveyances our previous performance was still below expectations.

Our recent performances show with higher ambulance arrivals, poor flow and other pressures, handover times can still largely be maintained. In fact the teams have managed to shave an average of 24 minutes off of every handover.

Director of Operations Simon Evans said: "There is still work to be done to meet the national 15 minute target for ambulance handovers, but every month we are improving. It is great for our teams to see the results of all of their hard work and it is even better news for our patients who arrive by ambulance. "