South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Paper No: SET/157/26
Trust Board Meeting: 30 September 2026
Public Agenda Item 4.6

Title of Paper:	**South Eastern Trust Winter Surge Plan 2026/2027**		
~~For Decision~~	For **Assurance**	~~For Information~~	~~For Discussion~~

1.0	**Background:**
	The Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) issued Winter Surge Planning Guidance for 2026/27 on 28 July 2026, requiring Health and Social Care Trusts to develop plans setting out how services will prepare for and respond to anticipated winter pressures. The Trust has published its Winter Surge Plan 2026/27, which outlines the actions that will be taken to support patients, service users and carers throughout the winter period. The Plan explains how the Trust will work with staff, partner organisations and local communities to maintain safe and effective services whilst responding to seasonal pressures and increasing demand. Please see attached the Plan for review (**SET/158/26**). The purpose of this paper is to provide Trust Board with an overview of the public-facing Winter Surge Plan and assurance regarding the arrangements in place to support delivery throughout winter 2026/27.
2.0	**Key Issues:**
	The Trust's Winter Surge Plan 2026/27 explains the Trust's approach to winter preparedness and is structured around four key priorities: 1. Think Home First – Delivering Care Closer to Home 2. Alternative Urgent Care Services 3. Improving Flow Through Our Hospitals 4. Improving Discharge Processes **1. Think Home First - Delivering Care Closer to Home** The Plan outlines a range of actions designed to help people remain independent and receive care closer to home wherever safe and appropriate. This includes continued development of Hospital at Home, support from multidisciplinary community teams and the introduction of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams focused on supporting those most at risk of hospital admission. **2. Alternative Urgent Care Services** The Trust will continue to promote the Choose Well campaign, support the use of Phone First and strengthen access to urgent care services, specialist pathways and same-day emergency care. The aim is to ensure people receive treatment in the

	most appropriate setting while helping Emergency Departments remain available for those with the most serious needs. **3. Improving Flow Through Our Hospitals** The Plan sets out actions to improve patient flow through hospitals, including strengthening acute medical services, maintaining robust operational oversight, improving coordination across hospital sites and protecting urgent and time-critical planned care wherever possible. **4. Improving Discharge Processes** A continued focus will be placed on timely discharge planning, enhanced multidisciplinary working, strengthened discharge arrangements and improved access to community-based support following discharge. The Plan also promotes a Home First approach supported by Early Review Teams and integrated discharge services. The Plan also highlights the role patients and communities can play in supporting winter resilience, including vaccination uptake, choosing the right service for their needs and taking steps to support their own health and wellbeing throughout winter. Trust Board is asked to note the: 1. Publication of the Trust's Winter Surge Plan 2026/27 on 18 September following an iterative feedback process involving SPPG and the Public Health Agency (PHA). 2. Arrangements in place to support patients, service users and carers throughout the winter period.
3.0	**Link to Strategic Objectives:**
	Our People ☒ Population Health & Health Inequalities ☒ Delivering Care Closer to Home ☒ Hospital Care ☒ Safety, Quality and Experience of Care ☒
4.0	**Resource Implications (inc Organisational, Financial, Human Resources):**
	1. Organisational
	Delivery of the Winter Surge Plan requires coordinated action across all operational Directorates and engagement with primary care, community, independent, voluntary and statutory partners.
	2. Financial
	The Plan has been developed within available resources and outlines actions intended to maximise existing capacity & resources during periods of winter pressure.

	3. Human Resources
	The Plan includes a specific focus on workforce resilience, staff wellbeing, recruitment activity, vaccination uptake and the continued rollout of the Collaborative Bank initiative.
	4. Environmental Factors Yes ☐ No ☒
5.0	**Impact on Safety, Quality and Experience (SQE):**
	1. Safety
	The Winter Surge Plan aims to maintain safe services through operational oversight, escalation arrangements, workforce resilience and effective patient flow arrangements.
	2. Quality
	The Plan supports delivery of timely, effective and person-centred care through investment in community alternatives, urgent care pathways and discharge arrangements.
	3. Experience
	The Plan seeks to improve the experience of patients and service users by helping them access the right care, in the right place, at the right time and supporting care closer to home where appropriate.
6.0	**Key Risks and Proposals to Mitigate:**
	1. Key Risks
	The Winter Surge Plan has been developed in recognition of: • Rising demand for urgent and emergency care services. • Increasing complexity of patient need. • Seasonal illness during winter months. • Pressures on hospital flow and discharge arrangements. • Workforce pressures across health and social care services.
	2. Proposals to Mitigate
	The Winter Surge Plan has been developed in recognition of: • Rising demand for urgent and emergency care services. • Increasing complexity of patient need. • Seasonal illness during winter months. • Pressures on hospital flow and discharge arrangements. • Workforce pressures across health and social care services.
7.0	**Risk Register:**
	It is listed on BAF? Yes ☒ No ☐ Is it listed on CRR? Yes ☒ No ☐

Lead Director:	**Helen Moore, Director of Planning, Performance and Informatics**
Date:	**18 September 2026**

Reasons for Paper Presentation

Decision	*Used when an item requires a formal agreement or endorsement by the meeting / committee members. Examples are approving minutes, budgets, proposals or policies.*
Assurance	*Used when an item can be measured against a certain criteria / standard. Examples are a project is on course with delivery or financial targets are being met.*
Information	*Used when an item is presented for the purpose of updating or informing the attendees without requiring a decision or action, such as reports, updates, or announcements.*
Discussion	*Used when an item is listed primarily for open discussion, brainstorming or gathering input from the members without requiring an immediate decision.*