



ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS
FOR ENGLAND & WALES

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WAITING TIMES IN HOSPITAL A&E UNITS COME UNDER SCRUTINY

Waiting times in hospital accident and emergency units will come under the spotlight during *Nationwide Casualty Watch 2000* organised by The Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales (ACHCEW) on Monday 31 January.

Over 180 Community Health Councils in England and Wales, Health and Social Services Councils in Northern Ireland and Health Councils in Scotland will visit their local A&E unit to survey how long patients have been waiting at 4.30pm that day. They will record how many people are waiting for treatment, how long they have been waiting and whether they are in beds, on trolleys or in chairs.

The initial results of the survey showing the longest waits will be published under embargo at noon on Tuesday 1 February. Last year's survey revealed waits of over 24 hours in some hospitals.

ACHCEW's director, Donna Covey said: "We have seen a lot of anecdotal publicity about cancelled operations and bed shortages. When the rest of the health care system overloads, it is A&E that takes the strain. This survey will give a picture of extent of the problem and the knock on effects on A&E wards.

More follows

"CHC members are volunteers whose role it is to represent the interests of the public to their local health authorities and trusts. This is a very effective way of getting a snapshot view of how services are operating so that we can highlight where things are working well and where serious questions need to be asked."

ACHCEW is working with the Royal College of Nursing who will be surveying nurses in charge of A&E departments at the same time to gain a better understanding of the causes of and solutions to long waits – these results will be published later in February.

ENDS

Editors notes

1. CONTACT: Helen Eldridge on 0171 609 8138 (direct) 0171 609 8405 (switchboard), 07957 641 852 (mobile), email: helen.eldridge@achcew.org.uk.
2. The Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales is the national voice of Community Health Councils (CHCs) representing the interests of the public in the NHS.