

## **Surgical AEC at Norfolk & Norwich University Hospitals NHS FT**

At the Norfolk and Norwich University hospital the Surgical AEC is run in a clinic area with an attached assessment/admissions ward. The ward consists of 36 beds and the AEC unit 11 treatment rooms, a large waiting room, drug room, utility room, and office space for medical staff. Having the ward attached to the clinic allows for patients to be admitted swiftly if needed, the clinic is also able to notify staff of potential admissions. The nurses work across both areas so are knowledgeable about the specialities seen.

Surgical AEC see's around 1200-1400 patients on average a month, the service offers ambulatory care for ten different specialities:

- General Surgery
- Urology
- Plastics
- Vascular
- Orthopaedics
- Thoracic
- Spinal
- ENT
- Max Fax
- Ophthalmology

All patients are seen and discharged, discharged with a plan of care, or admitted to the emergency assessment ward.

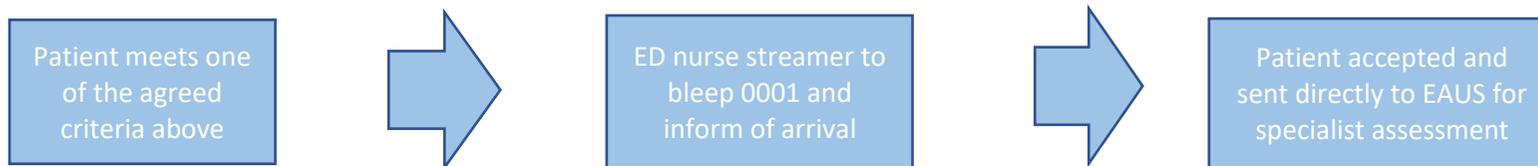
The registrar lead clinic is run 24/7, is staffed with 2RNS 1 Band 3 and 1 Band 2, 1 registrar and 2 Junior Doctors.

Patients are accepted from A&E, GP, and clinic areas, all surgical referrals are discussed with a bleep holder, a band 6 nurse, who coordinates whether the patient can go to the clinic or needs to go to the emergency assessment ward. All patients are treated as ambulatory unless it is obvious from the referral the patient is requiring admission. The unit assesses patients for admission rather than admitting patients for assessment, this ensures all patients that can be treated in an ambulatory area are, therefore decreasing the amount of unnecessary admissions and reducing delayed discharges.



During the Covid 19 pandemic, a process was created to 'stream' patients from A&E's front door so patients avoid being admitted to A&E.

- Abscess anywhere other than female genitalia
- Rectal foreign bodies – excepting named patients who have care plans in place
- Urinary Catheter / Nephrostomy problems
- Problems with surgical / interventional radiology drains



The streaming nurse at A&E's front door contact the bleep holder and the patient can attend SAEC immediately.

The SAEC aims to relieve pressure off A&E and provide a more structured led pathway for surgical patients. On discharge the SAEC offers 48hr access for those patients that are awaiting results, pain is going to be monitored, or those that just need reassurance.

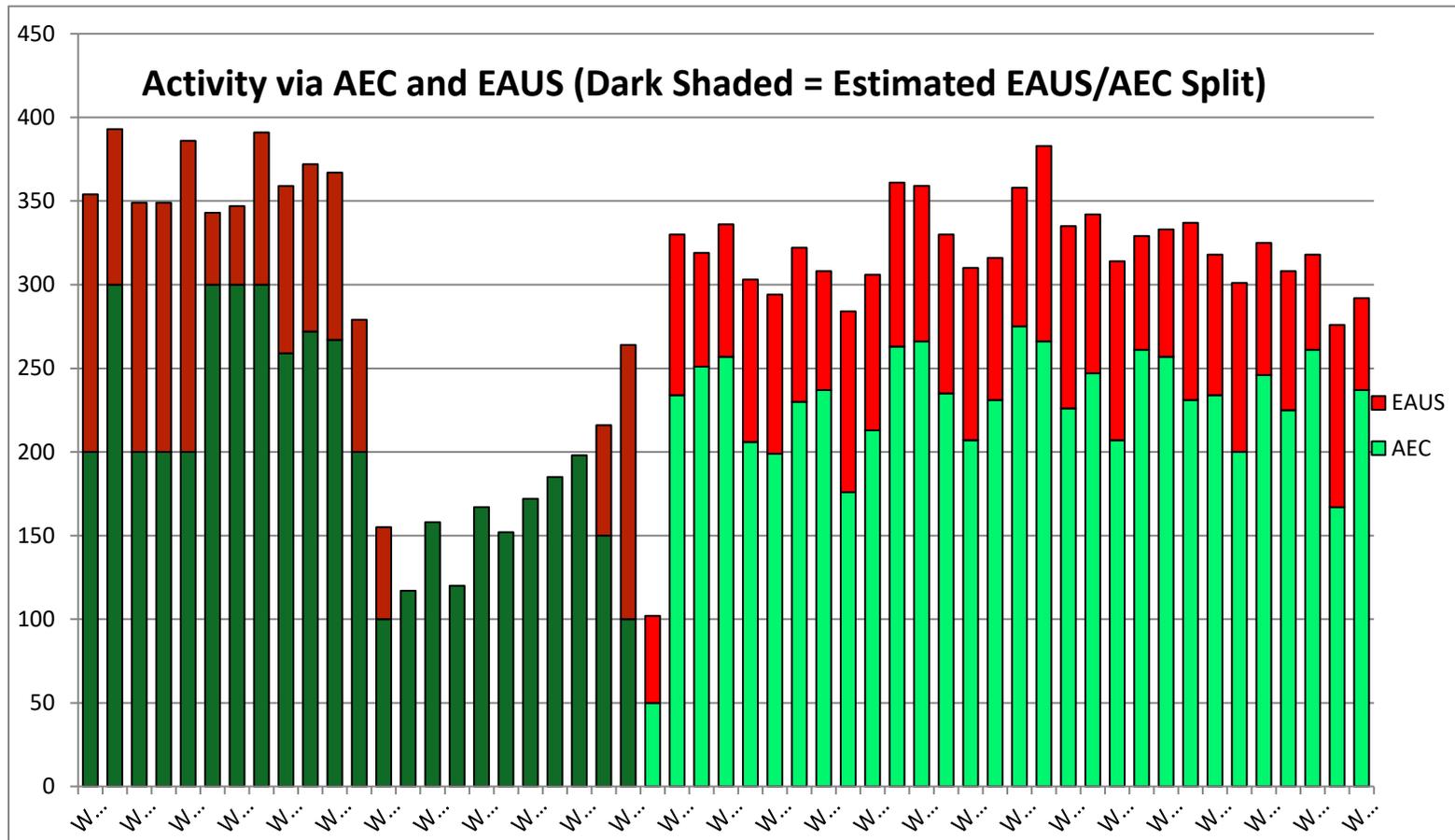
The SAEC offers an Ultrasound Clinic service, basing a sonographer on the unit, carried out twice a week, with sixteen slots available each day. This allows patients to be seen, scanned and discharged the same day. Our discharge rate for these patients is approximately 97%. In the near future it is planned a vascular slot will be offered once a week for Arterial scans expanding the service. The nurses on the unit have recently been trained in ultrasound guided cannulation which has proven beneficial.

AEC has a pharmacist on the unit, which provides prompt dispensing of TTOs, medication reviews and support for medical and nursing staff.

Symphony is used to report all attendances and SAEC runs as a paper free unit. All clerking, administration and nursing documentation are recorded on this system. Symphony allows letters to be generated for GPs and wards if the patient needs to be admitted.

During 2020 a tx messaging service was created for pts accepted from GPs to ensure a level of expectation was understood. This was also created to go in line with the paperless unit. The unit moved during the first Covid 19 surge so it was important patients had directions to the unit. The system allows the bleep holder to tx the patient a message which includes directions to the unit, instructions to be followed and explained it is a sit and wait service. This has also decreased the mention of 'Appointment times' in complaints and has reduced the expectation of being seen immediately.

The chart below demonstrates the number of ambulatory patients and direct admissions to the unit. As shown below the need for an ambulatory unit is proven. The patient experience in SAEC is far more comfortable and appropriate than if they were admitted directly to a ward. The complaint rate for both areas is extremely low in comparison to the number of patients seen.



During the pandemic the Unit was approached by PD&E to partake in a 'Virtual Work Experience' for schools and colleges. A video was put together to create a virtual experience of the unit, coming from AEC to theatres and onto the ward. The video included all professionals included in the patient's pathway to enable students to see what each profession involved. This was a chance to highlight the process of the unit and create a link with local schools.

To view the video click [here](#)

**Rebecca Fish**

***Ward Sister, Surgical AEC/ EAUS***

**Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS FT**