

88% of frontline staff say more support from third parties would improve patient flow

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A new OnePoll and Sodexo Healthcare survey of NHS staff has revealed that patient flow is a significant health and care challenge, with only 27% of those surveyed agreeing there are enough staff in their organisation for them to do their job properly, leading to a lack of people to maintain the correct levels of care when wards get busy.

The survey, which was completed by 250 frontline healthcare staff across a range of NHS Trusts, outlined the following as the largest challenges poor patient flow presents to them:

- increased pressure on staff (92%)
- delays in patient treatment, leading to growing elective recovery waiting lists (76%)
- reduced quality of care (70%)
- safety concerns (66%)
- poor patient experience (62%)

Simon Lilley, strategy and marketing director of healthcare, Sodexo UK & Ireland, said: “The pressure on healthcare leaders has never been greater to run efficient services that optimise [patient flow](#) during a time where overwhelmed capacity threatens their control. The impact of Brexit followed by the pandemic has further stretched capacity in healthcare services, with staff recruitment challenges, a growing elective backlog, high patient demand and increasing staff burnout.”

The OnePoll and Sodexo Healthcare survey also asked healthcare professionals how they think their respective hospitals could best [improve patient flow](#). While 90% of those surveyed believed more staff would bring the most significant improvement to patient flow, there was a disagreement over the next most-important focus, with improved community services, more out-of-hospital treatment and adding more beds all getting less than 50% of healthcare professionals agreeing they are the most effective

patient flow solutions, with all further options gaining even less support.

Another key finding was that 71% of respondents believe third-party organisations bring benefits to finding solutions for the current patient flow challenge. 57% thought this external support would help free up staff time to focus on patient care, with a further 56% believing this would improve the speed of service delivery and 38% thinking this would help to integrate services more effectively.

Lilley continued: “At Sodexo, we are passionate about supporting Trusts to keep health and care flowing every day, so it is great to see that frontline healthcare professionals recognise the supportive role we can play and the positive impact we can have on the patient experience.”

A YouGov survey of 2,000 NHS patients commissioned by Sodexo in December 2021, revealed that 93% of inpatients believe they are more likely to get better quicker and leave hospital sooner if they have had a positive hospital experience. While 87% of inpatients surveyed believe that the quicker any issue is resolved, the more likely their patient experience would be improved.