

RCEM Position Statement Paediatric Early Warning Scores

26 January 2024

RCEM welcomes the development and publication of the new national Paediatric Early Warning Score (nPEWS) [\[1\]](#) for hospitalised children.

The majority of children attending Emergency Departments (ED) are not admitted and are discharged home. Scoring systems already exist which have been validated for use in the ED setting eg, Paediatric Observation Priority Score (POPS) [\[2\]](#) which is specifically intended to quickly and reliably identify those children who are safe to be discharged home and those that are likely to require admission.

The nPEWS has not been specifically validated for use in ED patients. The national team is working on creating an aligned version specifically for EDs, utilising components of scores like POPS which are already shown to add value, to link with the inpatient version but this is not yet available. Many inpatient units will be moving to the nPEWS and Emergency Department Clinical Leads should carefully consider whether to implement the current nPEWS score at this stage, or await the release of the ED version. There are some theoretical advantages to a common scoring system, but also some disadvantages to the nPEWS being used in an ED. The advantages of an ED bespoke score might include different escalation criteria and not having a mandate to undertake blood pressure measurements on all children.

Consideration of which score to use should ideally be taken in conjunction with other system partners (eg, paediatric services, ambulance service, urgent care providers) however, as care within the Emergency Department will be the responsibility of the ED team rather than any other service, it is appropriate that the ED uses an early warning score which they feel is most appropriate to their service.

Where EDs feel it is not appropriate to use the new nPEWS, policies should be in place which cover the eventuality of a child remaining in the department 30 minutes after referral and clear guidance on whether on-going vital sign monitoring is with the nPEWS or continues with an ED validated tool.

References

[1] <https://www.england.nhs.uk/get-involved/cyp/pews/> Accessed 13/11/2023

[2] Roland D et al. The Paediatric Observation Priority Score: A System to Aid Detection of Serious Illness and Assist in Safe Discharge. *Open Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 2016, 4, 38-44. <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=67309> Accessed 13/12/2023

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