Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Surgical Ambulatory Emergency Care Unit v7

Version number: **7**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

Surgical Ambulatory Emergency Care Unit

Patient Information

Surgery Division

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What is the Surgical Ambulatory Emergency Care Unit?

The Surgical Ambulatory Emergency Care Unit (also known as SAEC) is a dedicated assessment and treatment area for patients with potential surgical issues. We are located on Orrell Ward (Level 1) at the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary in Wigan. Within the unit there is a waiting room, a triage area, five assessment cubicles and a treatment area. The unit is run by advanced practitioners and senior surgical staff.

You may have been referred to SAEC by your GP or directly from the emergency department. This leaflet will provide you with some information about the unit and what you may expect during your visit. It is a good idea to bring your regular medications with you, as well as an overnight bag, in case you need to stay.

Why have I been sent to SAEC?

You have been transferred to this unit for assessment by doctors from the Surgical team.

This does not necessarily mean that you need an operation.

When you arrive on the SAEC unit, the following will be checked:

- Blood pressure and heart rate
- Temperature and breathing
- A sample of urine may be requested

- Blood samples may also be taken for various tests

You may be asked to put on a gown.

You will be asked questions about your previous medical history, any treatment you are currently having and what has brought you into hospital on this occasion. You may have a cannula placed in your arm (also known as a ‘drip’) in case you need to be given antibiotics or fluids through your vein.

Other investigations, such as X-rays or ultrasound scans, may need to be performed. These investigations will help the doctor decide whether you need to be admitted to a ward or can be safely discharged home.

We would like to reassure you that safeguarding your privacy and dignity is a high priority for all our staff. Each of our cubicles has its own walls and doors; however, if you have any concerns at all, please speak to a member of staff.

What happens next?

We aim to treat you within 4 hours; however, the length of time depends on the tests requested. On arrival to the SAEC unit, all patients are asked not to eat or drink anything until a plan for your care has been made. If this is going to take a long time, fluids may be given through the cannula in your arm. The staff in the unit will inform you when you can eat and drink.

If the doctor determines that you need to stay in hospital, you will be transferred to a bed on a surgical ward. Sometimes there may be delays in this process; the staff on the unit will keep you updated about this.

If you are discharged home, you may be asked to return to a review clinic. Otherwise, you will be discharged back into the care of your GP. We will send a copy of your discharge letter to your GP; you can also request a copy of this letter too.

What if I need Surgery?

The surgical doctor will inform you if you require a surgical procedure. This may be done on the day you visit the SAEC unit, but if you need a surgical procedure that requires you to have a general anaesthetic, you may be asked to leave the unit and return the following day at 8am. If you are asked to return the following day for a surgical procedure, please do not have anything to eat and drink for 6 hours before your 8am arrival.

Contact information

Our telephone number is: 0300 707 8663

Opening hours

Our opening hours are:

Monday to Sunday 8am - 8pm

(Closed December 25th)



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