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National spotlight on South Tyneside NHS for success in reducing patient falls

South Tyneside District Hospital's success in reducing patient falls is highlighted in a new, national report.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust was one of just 19 trusts in England which took part in NHS Improvement's (NHSI) 90-day falls collaborative earlier this year, aimed at reducing the rate of falls in their hospitals and sharing examples of best practice and innovation which could be replicated across the NHS.

There was a 53% reduction in falls leading to harm at South Tyneside District Hospital in the first six months of this year, compared to the same period last year. The next step will be to roll out a new, improved falls prevention assessment and care plan.

Consultant Geriatrician Dr Suba Thirugnanasothy, who is South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's falls lead, said: "We were delighted when we were selected to be part of the falls collaborative. We felt it could help us to drive forward changes in practice to ensure a significant improvement in our inpatient falls rate. We had a lot of interest in our ideas from other trusts taking part and we learnt a lot from them. Our aim now is to build upon all the good work arising out of the collaborative to make our trust a centre of excellence for falls prevention and management. Staff across all areas have been really enthusiastic and have given us vital feedback which we're incorporating in our improvement work."

Before being given the opportunity to join the collaborative, the trust had already identified falls as a top priority and improvement work had begun. This included increased training for medical and nursing staff, renewed emphasis on medical staff reviewing medications known to increase the risk of falling in older adults, and the appointment of a falls specialist nurse. Link nurses for falls have been identified on every ward at the District Hospital. The falls specialist nurse meets with them and gives monthly updates to the trust's falls operational group, which ensures that improvements and learning are shared throughout the organisation. In addition, new starters in the Trust at all levels receive some falls training as part of the staff induction programme.

The trust's Medical Director Dr Shaz Wahid added: "Our focus is always on quality improvement to enhance patient safety and the efficiency and effectiveness of our services so I'm delighted that we were able to build upon the work we were already doing in relation to falls through our involvement in the collaborative to make such a positive impact, and we intend making more improvements in the future."



Falls are among the four most prevalent harms in hospitals (pressure ulcers, urinary tract infections and problems linked to blood clots or venous thromboembolism being the others) and they can cause frail and vulnerable patients severe harm. Even minor injuries which result from a fall can lead to reduced mobility, pain, anxiety and distress and loss of confidence and independence. They also put increased pressure on NHS services.

NHSI's report published today (Friday, July 21st) shows how much falls in hospitals cost the NHS and ties in the positive work of the collaborative. They estimate that the total cost of reported inpatient falls for 2015/16 was £630 million. The report also found that:

- In 2015/16 more than 250,000 falls were reported across acute, mental health and community hospital settings
- 77% of all reported inpatient falls happen to patients over the age of 65
- The estimated overall cost of £630 million equates to approximately 25% of the £2.3 billion total costs of falls estimated by NICE (The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)
- Older patients are both more likely to fall and more likely to suffer harm. Falls among this group also have a disproportionate impact on costs: they account for 77% of total falls and represent around 87% of total costs
- If inpatients falls are reduced by as much as 25-30% this could result in an annual saving of up to £170 million

ends

Pictured above: Celebrating success in reducing falls, Consultant Geriatrician and Falls Lead for South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust Dr Suba Thirugnanasothy, with Falls Specialist Nurse Catherine Peel, right

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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Notes to editors

In March 2016, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust came together to form an alliance known as South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group serving a population of 430,000 people.

A joint executive management team was introduced in September 2016 and extensive work is now taking place with both organisations working in partnership to transform local services and ensure high quality, safe and sustainable hospital and community health services which are for the future.

On 4 July 2017, a period of formal public consultation began, led by South Tyneside and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), as part of the 'Path to Excellence' programme and will run until 15 October. The first services being reviewed and formally consulted upon are stroke, emergency paediatrics and maternity and inpatient gynaecology services.

To find out more about how to get involved in The Path to Excellence consultation go to www.pathtoexcellence.org.uk, call 0191 2172670, or email pathtoexcellence@stft.nhs.uk pathtoexcellence@chsft.nhs.uk