



**Press release – 7 September**

## **South Tyneside and Sunderland Hospitals working together to reduce pressure ulcers**

South Tyneside and Sunderland hospitals, working together to improve care for patients, have set a target of reducing avoidable pressure ulcers by 25% over the next two years.

The target is central to South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group's joint pressure ulcer improvement plan. As part of the plan, the vast majority of the mattress stock at South Tyneside District Hospital has been replaced. The new mattresses, which had already been successfully introduced at Sunderland Royal Hospital, come with a pump which can be used to turn them into pressure-relieving air beds, meaning patients who develop pressure ulcers do not need to be moved to a different bed with one of the special mattresses. This is particularly important for the comfort and care of the seriously ill, including palliative patients.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust currently spends almost £190,000 a year on hiring pressure-relieving equipment, including the special mattresses. The investment of £115,000 over five years in the new mattresses will generate a saving of £136,000 a year. The money will be reinvested in patient care.

Pressure ulcers (also known as pressure sores or bedsores) are injuries to the skin and underlying tissues, primarily caused by prolonged pressure on the skin. Whilst they can happen to anyone, they tend to affect people confined to bed or who sit in a chair or wheelchair for long periods of time without moving or being repositioned.

Melanie Johnson, Executive Director of Nursing and Patient Experience at South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust said: "Prevention of pressure ulcers is of tremendous importance to both the patient and the NHS and is one of the quality improvement priorities for our trusts' working alliance, the South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group. Pressure ulcers can have a devastating impact on patients and their families due to the physical discomfort and pain they cause, as well as the profound social and psychological effects, all of which can

contribute to a reduced quality of life. They can also lead to an increased length of hospital stay and increased treatment costs in both hospital and the community.

“However, many pressure ulcers are avoidable with the right preventative measures based on individual patient risk assessment and plans for care and this is key to the Healthcare Group’s pressure ulcer improvement plan.”

Ann Fox, executive director of nursing, quality and safety for NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) said: “In South Tyneside and Sunderland we’re becoming increasingly aware that bedsores (pressure ulcers) are becoming more of an issue when patients are living in the community. Many pressure ulcers are preventable, which is why we are working with partners to develop a new training and education research project.”

The project has been developed by partners from South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, NHS South Tyneside CCG, NHS Sunderland CCG, the University of Sunderland and Sunderland CARE Academy.

Ann added: "This project will aim to raise awareness of the signs, symptoms and management of avoidable pressure ulcers for patients in the community and improve the quality of patient care. It will include a promotional campaign for health and social care professionals, as well as members of the public."

Among the many actions taken by the tissue viability teams at South Tyneside and City Hospitals NHS Foundation Trusts is the introduction of SSKIN – evidence-based interventions which focus attention on the factors that influence pressure ulcer prevention and detection.

SSKIN, which has been incorporated into the regular patient checks that take place 24/7 on every ward, stands for:

**Surface:** ensure patients have the right pressure distributing devices (e.g. mattress, cushion, off-loading devices for heels).

**Skin inspection:** early inspection means early detection. Ensure staff and carers know what to look for and act on changes immediately.

**Keep patients moving:** encourage patients to move or assist them with regular positional changes (frequency determined by risk assessment).

**Incontinence/moisture:** patient’s skin needs to be clean and dry.

**Nutrition/hydration:** ensure patients have the right diet and plenty of fluids.

## **Ends**

*The pic shows: From left to right, Karen Temple – Staff Nurse, Victoria Elliot – Auxillary Nurse, Amy Halliday - Staff Nurse and Michelle Carhart – Deputy Ward Manager with one of the new mattresses and special pumps.*

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by **Sharon Emms**

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