

PRESS RELEASE – 29th November, 2017



Team working is key to South Tyneside patients' safe, timely discharge from hospital

As the NHS braces itself for another extremely busy winter period, a team dedicated to ensuring a seamless discharge process for South Tyneside District Hospital patients is helping them to return home as quickly as possible, whilst freeing up much needed hospital beds on a daily basis.

The integrated discharge team comprises experienced South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust nurses and occupational therapists, South Tyneside Council social care staff, and Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust mental health staff.

By working together in one team, they are able to enhance the quality of patient care and improve the patient's experience, ensuring safe, timely discharge from hospital to the appropriate care setting.

The social work discharge team and the discharge nurse facilitators have worked in close partnership for many years but the introduction in January this year of one

inter-disciplinary team has strengthened the discharge process for the benefit of patients. The team has already had a positive impact, with a significant reduction in patients experiencing a delayed transfer of care home, from 8% in January to under 1%.

It is important that a patient's transfer out of hospital is planned, safe, dignified and timely. Remaining in hospital unnecessarily places patients, particularly older people, at risk of increased dependency and hospital-acquired infection. The integrated discharge team works closely with patients, families and carers prior to discharge to ensure the right care and support is in place for them on leaving hospital.

When patients are well enough for discharge, and if appropriate, they can be transferred from the wards to the safe and comfortable environment of the hospital's discharge lounge while they wait for any medication and to be collected by their families or for other transport. This frees up beds on the wards more quickly, enabling more patients who require acute care to access the right services at the right time.

The discharge lounge is managed by a senior nurse from the discharge team and staffed by healthcare assistants who ensure a smooth, efficient transfer from the ward and check that all the necessary arrangements have been made for patients to return home. In an effort to reduce the wait to leave and to ease the pressure on North East Ambulance Service's patient transport service, as in previous years during the winter months, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust will also be working with 'Lifeline' patient transport, who pick patients up from the discharge lounge and support a safe, effective and efficient discharge process.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation's Trust's Medical Director Dr Shaz Wahid said: "The integrated discharge team is crucial to the safe and timely discharge of patients from hospital once they are no longer in need of acute medical care. This is particularly important at this time of year when we traditionally see more emergency hospital admissions, particularly amongst frail older people who are more vulnerable to illness. The public can also help to keep vital emergency services free for the people with serious or life threatening problems who really need them this winter by

getting help and advice for less serious or less urgent conditions elsewhere instead of attending A&E.”

Councillor Tracey Dixon, Lead Member for Independence and Wellbeing at South Tyneside Council, said: “We recognise that people are usually keen to get back home after a stay in hospital and this new way of working helps us to do that while making sure people have the support they need at home to live independently.

“By putting people at the heart of our co-ordinated activities, we can help them not only to recover more easily, but also stay well in the long term.”

The public can help to keep the NHS running smoothly this winter by:

- Asking your local pharmacist. They are experts in the use of medicines and are able to diagnose and offer treatment for a range of minor illnesses and ailments immediately, without the need to make an appointment with a GP
- Using the NHS Child Health app if you are a parent or carer of children aged 0 to five. It provides easy-to-understand guidance to help look after children’s health and prevent unnecessary A&E attendances. It covers everything from oral health, upset tummies and diarrhoea, to advice on bumps and bruises. It can be downloaded from Google Play and the App Store by searching for NHS Child Health
- Calling NHS 111. If you have an urgent health need but are not sure if you need A&E, you can speak to highly trained advisors, supported by healthcare professionals, who will assess your symptoms and direct you to the best care. In some cases they will be able to book appointments for you
- Having the flu vaccine if you are in an at-risk group. It is available for free on the NHS for: anyone over the age of 65; pregnant women; children and adults with an underlying health condition (particularly long-term heart or lung disease), and children and adults with weakened immune systems

Photo caption: Members of the integrated discharge team based at South Tyneside District Hospital

Issued by **Kay Jordan**

For press enquiries on this release, contact **0191 404 1128** or email

kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk