

PRESS RELEASE – 16 January, 2018

Plea for patients to help others by returning unwanted NHS equipment



The NHS equipment loan service in Gateshead is appealing for items that are no longer needed to be returned as it deals with an upsurge in demand during the winter months.

Gateshead Equipment Service plays a vital role in supporting patients in the borough to maintain their independence and mobility, in safety, at home. Each year, staff process around 15,000 requests for equipment and deliver and collect more than 30,000 items, ranging from walking sticks and walking frames and wheelchairs to electric beds and hoists. South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, which provides the service, invests about £2million annually in new aids and refurbishes and reissues £2.6 million worth of returned equipment to patients each year.

The winter period is always extremely busy for the service, with increased requests for equipment due to the colder weather having a significant impact on the number of people becoming ill - particularly the over 65s and those with long-term health conditions - and on the number of slips and falls.

Irene Stables, Divisional Director for Community Services with the Trust, said: “This winter is proving to be a fairly harsh one and it would be much appreciated if patients and their families could arrange for the return or collection of any unwanted equipment in a timely manner to enable us to help others.

“The NHS as a whole is addressing the challenge of an increasing ageing population and this is reflected in the ever-growing demand on Gateshead Equipment Service. More patients with complex conditions are being treated at home, which can result in improved experience and better outcomes, as well as a reduction in hospital admissions. However, having the right equipment available to meet their needs can mean the difference between a patient being able to live independently or requiring someone to care for them. It can also help to speed up the process of discharge from hospital.”

Patients are referred to Gateshead Equipment Service by those involved in the ongoing management of their healthcare needs, such as hospital teams, occupational therapists and community nurses. Decisions about the kind of equipment needed will often be the result of an assessment of care and support needs.

If you or a relative has NHS equipment provided by Gateshead Equipment Service that is no longer needed, please contact them to arrange for it to be returned to the loan system.

Equipment can be returned to Gateshead Equipment Service, 1 Queensway North, Queens Park, Team Valley Trading Estate NE11 0QD, or you can arrange to have it collected by ringing 0191 4971599.

Ends

The photo shows: Left to right, technical officer Michael Tucker, clinical specialist occupational therapist Lucy Goy and driver Robert Shreaves, from Gateshead Equipment Service

Issued by **Kay Jordan**

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