

**March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

## **Praise for South Tyneside NHS 'snow angels'**

People across the North East are still being urged to stay away from A&E unless they are seriously unwell or in need of critical or life-saving care.

The plea from all NHS providers in the region comes as attendances at A&E have soared since the snow melted, with extremely high numbers of very sick patients requiring treatment.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust has thanked its dedicated staff in hospital and in the community for their extraordinary efforts to care for patients and limit disruption to services during the severe weather. Many doctors, nurses, estates and facilities staff and managers went the extra mile, in some cases sleeping over on site, or with friends nearby, and undertaking journeys lasting several hours to ensure they were available for their shifts.

Operational Manager for Acute and Urgent Care Kay Stidolph said: "Despite the extremely bad weather, it was very much business as usual for us. Looking after patients requires a team effort and everyone - from the medical staff to porters and kitchen staff - was determined, as always, to maintain safe patient – even if that meant abandoning their cars in the snow."

Emergency Assessment Unit Manager (EAU) Laura Ord, who lives in Hebburn, said: "I couldn't get transport home so I stayed at a friend's house in South Shields and walked into work. I'm very proud to say that no-one missed a shift on EAU in the three days when it was particularly bad."

Consultant Geriatrician Dr Becky Wiseman, who lives in Gateshead, said: "I had to start at around 7am in the morning and I got a lift in and brought a little overnight bag. I felt happier staying, knowing that I would definitely be there for my patients."

Out in the community, there were countless examples of the determination of staff to ensure they delivered vital care as usual to patients in their own homes. Some were prepared to walk miles to get to work and some volunteered on their day off to do calls on foot in the area where they live to relieve pressure on colleagues.

Undaunted by having to get fellow nurses and members of the public to dig her car out of the snow three times, one healthcare assistant still managed to get all her calls done.

Trust staff at St Benedict's Hospice in Ryhope, Sunderland, slept at the hospice, where specialist palliative care is provided to the people of Sunderland and the surrounding district by a multi-professional team through a wide range of services, including in-patient beds and day services.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executive Ken Bremner said: "We'd like to say a **huge** thank-you to all of our staff for their amazing commitment and dedication in particularly trying circumstances last week. They epitomise the spirit of NHS employees who are always willing to go above and beyond in the best interests of patients

"Whilst the worst of the weather appears to be over now, NHS services are very busy and it is important that we have the public's help to enable us to prioritise patients who are very sick. We would ask people who are not seriously ill to seek alternatives to A&E wherever possible. Advice and signposting to community services is available for free through NHS 111."

### **Top tips to 'Stay Well' this winter:**

**Choose the right service.** Use the NHS Choices website for health advice and information about where to go to get the right treatment.

**See your local pharmacist .** Your pharmacist can advise on a wide range of common illnesses. If you start to feel unwell, even if it is just a cough or cold, get immediate help from your pharmacist before it becomes more serious.

If you need medical help fast but it's not life-threatening or an emergency, call **NHS 111** at any time for advice.

**Self-care.** For many winter ailments such as coughs, colds and flu-like symptoms, people don't need to go to A&E or their local GP practice and are better off taking some paracetamol, drinking plenty of fluids and resting.

**Stock up your medicine cabinet.** Make sure you have the essentials.

**Avoid slips and trips.** Don't go out unless you have to; use footwear with slip-resistant soles.

If you care for children, the **NHS Child Health** app is free to download and offers a wealth of advice and support.

The '**Stay Well This Winter**' campaign is an initiative from Public Health England and NHS England to help the most vulnerable people prepare for winter and avoid having to visit hospital due to common winter illnesses.

## **Get your flu jab**

### **Who can get the vaccination?**

- People aged 65 and over.
- People with long term health conditions
- Health care workers
- Children aged two and three
- School children up to year four
- Children aged six months and above with some health conditions

**Ends**

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