

PRESS RELEASE – SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

South Tyneside Hospital helping to ensure safe, smooth return to comfort of home for patients



As the NHS braces itself for another extremely busy winter period, plans are already in place to ensure South Tyneside patients are able to return to their families and the comfort of their own homes as quickly as possible, thereby freeing up much-needed beds on a daily basis.

Helping to make the transition from hospital to home as smooth as possible, South Tyneside District Hospital has officially opened its new discharge lounge which has been relocated so it is now conveniently situated near to the main entrance. This makes it easier for relatives and carers to pick up their loved ones and they can take advantage of the free 20-minute drop-off/pick-up period allowed before having to pay for parking.

When patients are well enough for discharge and all the necessary arrangements have been made for them to return home, they can be transferred from the wards to the safe and comfortable environment of the discharge lounge, which is staffed by nurses and healthcare assistants. There, they can 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 process is managed by an integrated discharge team, which comprises experienced nurses and 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 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.

To help to further reduce the wait to leave and ease pressure on North East Ambulance Service's patient transport service during the coming winter months, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust also has an agreement with St John Ambulance to pick up patients from the discharge lounge and support a safe, effective and efficient discharge process.

Opening the new discharge lounge, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust Chairman Neil Mundy said: "I am certain that our new discharge lounge, with its convenient location and comfortable surroundings, will be a tremendous asset, helping to improve patient flow not only during the winter months but throughout the year."

The Trust's Medical Director Dr Shaz Wahid said: "Planned, safe and timely discharge of patients is a key component in the efficient running of our hospital and it is particularly important during the winter months when we traditionally see more emergency hospital admissions, particularly amongst frail older people who are more vulnerable to illness. It is also very important for the patients themselves: an

unnecessarily long hospital stay can place patients, especially older people, at more risk of falls, fractures, infection, loss of muscle strength and increased dependency.”

The public can play their part in keeping the NHS running smoothly this coming 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 free 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 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

Ends

Photo caption: The opening of the new discharge lounge at South Tyneside District Hospital

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