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Media Release

Health Minister Simon Burns visits the RUH

Health Minister Simon Burns saw first-hand the care a patient who has suffered a stroke would receive in hospital when he visited the RUH in Bath today.

Mr Burns was shown the path a stroke patient would take through the hospital, from their arrival in the Emergency Department, through having a brain scan in Radiology, before going on to be cared for on the Acute Stroke Unit.

He met a range of staff who told him about the improvements the hospital has made to stroke services in recent years, including the setting up of a 26-bed dedicated stroke unit to give patients specialised care more quickly.

These changes have seen the RUH rise to the top 10% in the country for stroke care, according to the National Sentinel Audit of Stroke, for: organisation and delivery of stroke care, access to stroke clinics, waiting times, patient involvement and the existence of a specialised team for all levels of stroke care and surgery.

Mr Burns, the Minister for Health, said: "I was delighted to meet the staff involved in delivering stroke services at the Royal United Hospital.

"Their dedication to ensuring stroke patients receive the specialist care they need in the crucial first couple of days after a stroke - by taking them directly to the Acute Stroke Unit - improves their chances of recovery enormously. Patients receiving the care of a specialist team can also be discharged sooner to continue their rehabilitation at home. This is a great example of what can be achieved and what I'd like to see more of across the country."

The hospital's stroke unit incorporates a four-bed hyper-acute area with continuous physiological monitoring and a full stroke specialist multidisciplinary team of doctors, nurses and therapists. It provides thrombolysis, or clot-busting, around the clock.

Chief Executive James Scott said: "We have carried out major improvements to the treatment we give patients who have suffered a stroke in recent years, and providing even better care for these patients is one of our top priorities.

"We believe continued support for a community education programme with GPs, ambulance trusts and community staff to ensure patients are FAST-tested before arrival at hospital is essential to make this happen.

"The earlier the signs of stroke are spotted, the more chance we have to treat it and I would urge members of the public to ensure they are aware of what the FAST test is – it could save someone's life."

Mr Burns also visited a pioneering new part of the hospital, known as the 'Qulturum', an area for staff based on a concept which originated in Jonkoping, Sweden.

The Qulturum is essentially a quality improvement hub where staff who specialise in areas such as patient safety, clinical effectiveness and patient experience work together to drive forward fostering a culture of improvement throughout the organisation.

All groups of staff within the hospital are urged to come forward with their own ideas for how to improve the quality of care and will be supported to help them deliver the changes necessary to bring their good ideas into practice.

Ends

Notes to Editors:

FAST is a simple test anyone can learn to help them recognise the signs of stroke in others.

It stands for:

Facial weakness - can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?

Arm weakness - can the person raise both arms?

Speech problems - can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

Time to call 999