

## **Press Release**

### **18 weeks and Wilts Gazette**

The 18 week target is part of a national NHS initiative, driven by Primary Care trusts, to cut patient's waiting times for both hospital appointments and treatment. The aim is to ensure that patients do not have to wait longer than 18 weeks from their GP referral to the start of their hospital treatment.

The RUH and local PCT's have pro-actively made arrangements for certain patients to receive their treatments from other health care providers to ensure the 18 week target is delivered on time for March 2008.

Like many hospitals, there are a few specialities where achievement of the target is challenging, and the use of alternative providers gives additional operating capacity.

The recent prolonged outbreak of norovirus has affected the whole healthcare community leading to both acute hospital and community hospital beds being closed and some operations being cancelled. To ensure patients are not put at a disadvantage because of these pressures, some have been offered their treatment elsewhere. These patients are being approached on an individual basis and are given a choice between private and other local providers. (Shepton Mallet treatment centre, the Bath Clinic and Capio Salisbury for example).

To date, less than one per cent of Wiltshire patients have been offered treatment at other healthcare providers. The total number of Wiltshire patients actually treated by the RUH, either as day cases or in-patients, between April and December 2007 was 10,107 patients (against the 92 being treated elsewhere).

Director of Patient Care at the RUH, Diane Fuller says

"Waiting times for outpatients, diagnostics and elective treatment are rapidly reducing at the Royal United Hospital. The trust is working hard with GPs and primary care trusts to ensure that patients are treated as quickly as possible.

By the end of March 2008 the RUH is working towards a target that 85% of all admitted patients and 90% of non - admitted patients should wait less than 18 weeks from GP referral to the start of their treatment.

By June 2008 this figure will further improve to 90% of admitted patients and 95% of non admitted patients".

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**Ends**

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