

18th December 2009

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Media Release

Home is the Best Place

The Royal United Hospital in Bath is asking for the support of family and friends to help get patients home for Christmas.

Gareth Howells, Assistant Director of Nursing says “Although we try to make the festive season fun, no one wants to be in hospital at the best of times, least of all Christmas. By planning for tests and referrals, getting medication ready to take away, and making sure transport is arranged, we can get patients through the system quickly and safely back home.”

“We’re seeing a change in approach in healthcare towards getting patients back in their own home wherever possible. Essential care or rehabilitation can be arranged for patients at home through social workers and community teams, rather than needing a stay in a community hospital.”

Mike Osborn, Clinical Psychologist says “We should never underestimate the psychological impact of our environment in the healing process. Research shows us that the atmosphere we recover in is as equally important as the treatment we receive - the more comfortable a person is, the better they will be.

“Wounds heal faster and general well being is improved when someone feels relaxed in their own home.”

When patients are admitted to the RUH they are given a “safe to go home date” - a realistic date for when someone is likely to be medically and therapeutically ready for discharge. This date is reviewed on a daily basis and can always change depending on the patient’s condition, but the important thing is starting to plan for that person going home, right from the beginning.

For the RUH this means making sure all the tests and assessments are done in parallel wherever possible, not one after the other, making sure medication is ready and prepared for that date and ensuring all referrals to social care are carried out as soon as possible so that everything is in place for going home.

For the patient’s friends, families or carers this means starting to think about transport home. Hospital transport is for those with medical need only so options are a lift home with a friend or relative, booking a taxi or catching a bus. Transport needs to be planned so that patients can be picked up by 11am on the day they are due to go home. The RUH has an

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excellent Discharge Centre where patients can relax, watch television or read a book whilst they wait to be collected. If the patient has any concerns at all about how they will get home, they can chat with the nurse taking care of them.

Families and friends can also help by making sure the patient's house will be ready for them, that someone can pop in and put the heating on, and that basic foodstuffs like milk and bread have been bought.

Gareth adds, "Acute hospitals are always open, and here at the RUH we can see anything up to 200 people every day coming to our emergency department. Whilst not all of these will need admitting, there is always a constant demand for our services.

"We can plan some of our surgery and manage the number of patients coming in and out, but peaks in emergency patients, most noticeable over the winter period, make it hard to predict our bed situation. By better managing the way people go home, we can work on creating capacity for new emergencies."

Mike adds, "It's a common sense approach to getting patients back home and we need the help of friends and family to do this. Ultimately, we want to give patients the confidence to go home and continue to get well."

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