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## Media Release

### Public urged to 'keep warm, keep well'

The RUH has put plans in place to combat the increased pressure expected this winter – and is urging people to follow some simple steps to keep well in the cold weather.

Winter is traditionally a challenging time for the health service, with more elderly and vulnerable people needing hospital care and support in the community, and bad weather and seasonal infections taking their toll.

This winter the hospital has agreed plans for working more closely than ever before with its health and social care partners across B&NES and Wiltshire, to ensure patients receive the best care in the most appropriate place.

The plans will see the RUH working with GPs, community nurses and social workers to make sure that alternatives to being admitted to hospital are available – so that only those patients who really need acute care come to the RUH.

Senior Nurse Yvonne Pritchard says: "The public can play a huge part in helping us this winter by preventing diarrhoea and sickness bugs from being brought into the hospital by patients or visitors.

"Having just one person come into the hospital with diarrhoea and vomiting can have a devastating ripple effect upon us. It spreads extremely easily which can lead to whole wards having to be shut, which then prevents us from being able to admit patients to these wards.

"Our advice is to stay away from hospital if you have diarrhoea or vomiting until 48 hours after your symptoms have gone.

"We'd also ask people to think if they really need to come to our Emergency Department, and consider going to either their GP, walk in centre or community health facility."

Extra beds have been put on standby to cope with an expected surge in demand over the next few months and measures have been taken to reduce demand upon the Emergency Department.

These include moving the B&NES GP Out of Hours service from Riverside Health Centre to the hospital, with GPs on hand to spot and treat those patients who don't need to be seen in the Emergency Department.

All B&NES patients are advised to call the GP 'Out of Hours' service on 0300 033 9933 when their own surgery is closed.

Yvonne added that keeping warm is essential to keeping well this winter and urged people to follow five simple tips to look after themselves:

1. Get a flu jab to protect yourself against seasonal flu – this is free from your GP if you are over 65, have a long-term health condition, or are pregnant. The RUH is offering flu jabs to all its staff and encouraging them to get vaccinated to ensure they are protected from the virus.
2. Heat your home well – set the temperature between 18 and 21 degrees centigrade so you can keep your home warm and your bills as low as possible.
3. Get financial support – grants, benefits and advice are available to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating, or get help with bills.
4. Eat well – have hot drinks throughout the day, and at least one hot meal a day.
5. Look after yourself and others. Wrap up warm if you really do have to go outside on a cold day. If you have an older neighbour or relative, look out for them during the winter to make sure they are safe and well.

## **Notes to Editors**

To request an interview, please contact the Communications department on 01225 826230.