

Thursday 6 January 2022

Public urged to help support their local hospitals during extremely difficult start to New Year

Health leaders have issued an urgent appeal for people in Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire to play their part and support their local hospitals during what has been described as an “extraordinarily difficult” start to 2022.

As local health services do all they can to help people requiring treatment for Covid-19 and other illnesses, while dealing with soaring rates of Covid-related staff absence, those in charge of running our hospitals and other health services have said local people can really make a difference by:

- Helping loved ones who are well enough to leave hospital to recover at home or in another suitable care setting, meaning that hospital beds are freed up for those who really need them.
- Only visiting Accident and Emergency departments or calling 999 in the case of a genuine life-threatening emergency.

Cara Charles Barks, Chief Executive of the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust said:

“A&E departments in all of our hospitals are experiencing a significant level of demand and those who attend our emergency departments without very good reason are making it much harder for our teams to care for those patients who really do need emergency medical treatment.

“If you need medical help, please remember the NHS 111 online service can give advice, including to those who think that they might need to visit a minor injury unit to treat issues such as broken bones and burns, while pharmacists can help with minor complaints including coughs, colds, ear ache and rashes.

“If you can access the internet then the online option will be best suited for you by visiting www.111.nhs.uk, otherwise please call the service on 111 and a trained advisor will help you. For more routine issues such as hangovers or an upset tummy please use your local pharmacy.

“Using the right service for you will mean that our A&E departments can respond rapidly for those people who need emergency treatment.”

Dr Jon Westbrook, Medical Director at Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said:

“Our hospitals and other health and care services are facing an extraordinarily difficult start to the new year with Omicron cases rising at an alarming rate and unprecedented numbers of staff unable to come into work to help because of Covid-related illness and isolation.

“While we are still able to provide care for patients and are doing all we can to address this situation, we desperately need the public to do all they can to support us.

“Only very ill people should be in our hospitals at the moment and families can help free up beds for those who really need them by promptly collecting and supporting loved ones who are well enough to leave hospital and continue their recovery at home.”

Earlier this week both Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in Swindon and the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust declared internal critical incidents because of rising numbers of Covid patients, high levels of demand for beds and rising levels of sickness among staff.

For more information about local health care services and when to use them, visit <https://bswccg.nhs.uk/your-health/hospital-care>

