Joint initiative helps to ease winter pressure on hospitals

AN INITIATIVE run to ease the pressure on local hospitals during the busy winter period has been hailed as a success.

The Winter Action initiative ran for six days in January and was led by Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, with support from Hampshire County Council, Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, North Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group and West Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

The overall aim was to reduce pressure on Hampshire Hospitals by reducing the number of people who need to be admitted to hospital and increasing the number of patients discharged from Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital, Royal Hampshire County Hospital, in Winchester, and Andover War Memorial Hospital.

For the period of the Winter Action, departments across Hampshire Hospitals, including ambulatory care, pharmacy and radiology, offered extended services to prevent patients being admitted or help those who were well enough to leave hospital to do so as soon as possible.

In the community, Hampshire County Council’s adult services team worked hard to ensure that support was in place for the additional patients discharged from hospital. Southern Health’s Enhanced Recovery at Home team provided support and care to people in their homes, allowing them to leave hospital and continue their recovery in their own environment, while the integrated community teams and adult mental and older peoples mental health teams worked alongside other agencies to keep people well in their own communities and avoid hospital admissions.

The results were impressive. Over the course of the six days, while 403 sick patients had to be admitted to the hospitals, 640 were able to leave. This had a positive effect on the performance of the emergency departments. This is measured in the percentage of people either admitted to hospital or discharged within four hours. This figure improved by around 15 per cent during Winter Action.

Julie Maskery, chief operating officer at Hampshire Hospitals, said: “I’d like to say a huge thank you to everybody who played a part in Winter Action. Our staff did a fantastic job and we received incredible support from all of our health, social and community care partners.

“We were able to demonstrate what is possible with a concerted effort and focusing certain resources. Because this is an exceptional effort with more resource and different ways of working, we are exploring whether some of these short term measures can be put in place permanently as part of our business as usual.

“While Winter Action helped to ease some of the pressure on our hospitals, we still need people to help us by making sure that they use the right health service for their needs. Around 15 per cent of patients who visit our emergency departments could receive the treatment they need from their GP or even their local chemist.

“If you are unsure which service would best suit your needs, call NHS 111 for advice, simply by dialling 111,
where experienced call handlers are on hand to give you advice and direct you to the most appropriate local service.”

Dr Nicola Decker, clinical chair at North Hampshire CCG, added: “We were really pleased to be a part of this initiative and the way in which people worked together was very encouraging.

“In the longer term, North and West Hampshire CCGs, and the partner organisations that were involved, are working together to deliver care in new ways that help to keep them out of hospital and to get them home sooner.

“This work is ongoing, and we look forward to involving members of the public from across North and Mid Hampshire.”

Jenny Erwin, director of commissioning at West Hampshire CCG and Chair of the North and Mid Hampshire Local A&E Delivery Board, added: “Winter Action has again seen staff from across health and social care organisations working together to help patients leave hospital when they are ready to go home, and improve waiting times in the emergency departments.

“We have learned a lot from this event and will now concentrate on embedding this into day to day practice.”

ENDS

PHOTO – Staff from Hampshire Hospitals and Southern Health working together during Winter Action

Notes to Editors

1. Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust provides hospital services to a population of approximately 570,000 people in Hampshire and parts of West Berkshire.
2. HHFT has around 6,000 staff and a turnover of £385million a year.
3. HHFT delivers one hospital service across multiple locations including its own hospitals, Andover War Memorial Hospital, Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital and Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester. It also provides outpatient and assessment services from Bordon and Alton community hospitals.
4. As a Foundation Trust, HHFT is accountable to the local community through a system of local ownership with members and elected governors. HHFT has around 18,000 staff and public members. Foundation Trusts are free from central government control and can reinvest any surplus to develop clinical services. They are authorised and regulated by NHS Improvement, an independent regulator.

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