

Our Ref: JZ/DP/LJ

2ND June 2016

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Dear Healthwatch

I would firstly like to thank Healthwatch following receipt of your detailed report "Delays to Patient Discharge April 2016".

The information, feedback and recommendations provided within the report is invaluable to enable the Trust to continually improve the service we provide to our patients.

We had previously worked at meeting your recommendations from your visit in December 2014 regarding the report "Arrangements for Discharge ". A specific recommendation within that report was around Delays in transport being available to our patients. Your latest report acknowledges that this no longer causes a delay to a patient's discharge being completed in a timely manner. The Trust continues to provide an ambulance service with the provision of 2 additional private crews well known to the Trust to support the service we provide. This allows us the ability to meet the demands and to review as necessary.

I would like to assure you the report from February this year has been reviewed, and I would like to address your specific concerns and recommendations below.

1. Environmental Recommendations

- We have resolved the problem of seating and now provide seating of various heights to meet the needs of all patients within the discharge lounge.
- A toilet and disabled toilet are available close to the discharge lounge if required. We acknowledge that it would be preferable that the discharge lounge had a toilet situated within it. We have asked the estates department to look at the feasibility to install a toilet within the discharge lounge.
- A 40 inch flat screen television has been wall mounted to ensure good visibility to all patients wishing to watch it. We have also started to purchase the Daily Express each morning and a range of magazines for patient's perusal.
- The leaflets rack has been reviewed and appropriate leaflets should be available for patients to view.
- Antibacterial gel dispensers have been requested as recommended at both the entrance and exit of the discharge lounge.

2. Procedures used when doctors and consultants complete ward rounds.

- We acknowledge that occasionally there can be an issue within our busy medical teams around the timeliness of providing medication and discharge letters. Work is on-going to look at different ways of working. It is an agenda item to be discussed within the Emergency Care Senior Team meeting on 16th June 2016.

3. Reducing Risk

- A new patient handover sheet has recently been devised. This will go to Health Care Records Committee meeting for agreement. Within this handover sheet it encompasses both dietary requirements and physical needs of patients coming to the discharge lounge.
- Patients who have high demands are assessed by the staff on duty within the discharge lounge at that point in time to ensure they are able to be cared for with the same high standard they received on their discharging ward. Once in the discharge lounge a patient with specific requirements, such as dementia would automatically be prioritised for discharge and we would aim for their relative or carer to be present in the discharge lounge where possible.
- Staffing in the discharge lounge is assessed continually by the Patient Flow Manager and Health roster to ensure appropriate staffing mix. Staff within the discharge lounge are aware to escalate to the Patient Flow Manager and/or the Portering Service if there is increased demand in the discharge lounge to support the flow of patient.

4. Communication to patients around Medication and Discharge Letters.

- You acknowledge the Trust follow the safe practice of a Registered Nurse in both checking the patients discharge prescription and providing instructions to the patient.
- Staff on duty currently go to pharmacy and collect a discharge prescription or several if ready in one go. This process stops the patient waiting any longer than necessary. Again, staff have the option of escalating to the Patient Flow Manager for additional support if the staff in the discharge lounge are busy meeting the needs of the patients in the lounge at that time.

5. Communication around a patients discharge

- The new patient handover information sheet prompts staff to ensure they have explained to the patient the role of the discharge lounge if not already addressed and the patients individual discharge plan.

6. Volunteer Drivers delivering medication/discharge letter later in the day to patients.

- We plan to discuss this recommendation at the Emergency Care Senior Team meeting, 16th June 2016.

This report will be shared and discussed within the Discharge Teams staff meeting in June including your lovely comments around the staff within the discharge lounge being friendly, professional, accommodating and cooperative during your visit.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your valuable input to the Trust and continuing support to improve our patient's experience. I would also like to add we have devised a Standard Operational Policy for the Discharge Lounge, giving Trust staff the information of the service provided by the staff on duty in the Discharge Lounge. This will be shared with Discharge Lounge team meeting and the Emergency Care Senior Team meetings in June 2016, before disseminating throughout the trust.

If you require any further information, please contact Kirsty Robinson on (01642) 383159.

Yours Sincerely

Louise Johnson
General Manager
Emergency Care