Trust gears up for a severe winter

The Trust has put a number of measures in place to ensure all its services stand up to the tests of winter – including severe weather.

The Trust, like others, experiences higher demand for its services and an increase in hospital admissions during the winter. It has launched a series of projects over recent weeks in a bid to ease the pressure and enhance resilience. These include the provision of:

- Extra beds at times of peak demand
- Increased ward rounds to assist with prompt discharge
- Peak time increases in medical and nursing staff in the emergency department at North Devon District Hospital, especially at Christmas and New Year
- Extra rapid response and community staff to support people in their own homes, avoid admissions and support discharges from hospital
- A Home Before Lunch campaign aimed at discharging more patients from NDDH by midday

The Trust also staged an emergency planning exercise, dubbed Winter Wonderland, at the end of November to test its resilience and how it would prioritise services in the event of severe weather.

Kate Lyons, the Trust’s director of operations, said: “The colder weather at this time of year always brings an increase in health problems, including respiratory illness, flu, norovirus and injuries caused by falls or slips.

“We have robust plans in place to cope with the extra pressure this puts on our acute, community and specialist services, and to deal with severe weather if it comes.

“Our priorities are to ensure critical services operate as normal in our hospitals and to identify and care for our most vulnerable patients, with the aim of avoiding unnecessary admission to hospital where possible.

“Our community nursing teams have been visiting vulnerable patients at home to ensure they are prepared.”

As part of the Home Before Lunch campaign, an additional dedicated discharge vehicle is being used at NDDH. A discharge lounge has opened and a dedicated transfer nurse is supporting transfers around the hospital.

With support from NHS Devon, the Trust has also been able to invest £100,000 into its onward care team based at RD&E in Exeter.

Other formats
If you need this newsletter in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.
Mystery shopper scheme in line for national award

An innovative mystery shopper scheme that enables patients to give anonymous feedback about healthcare they receive from the Trust has been shortlisted for a national award.

The joint project was launched by the Trust and the Patients Association, an independent charity, in the summer.

The two organisations have been named as finalists in the 2012 Patient Experience Network National Awards (PENNA).

Under the mystery shopper scheme, current and prospective patients are asked to evaluate their experience of using Trust services through each stage of their care.

The feedback is collated and made anonymous by the Patients Association before being sent to the relevant clinicians and teams involved in that person’s care.

The information is used to share best practice and identify areas for improvement.

Individual patient stories are also shared with Trust board members, to provide them with insights into people’s everyday experience of the services for which they are responsible.

Carolyn Mills (pictured), the Trust’s director of nursing, said: “We are very proud to be selected as a finalist.

for the PENNA awards along with our partners at the Patients Association. We consider patients to be experts by experience, and in recent months the mystery shopper scheme has proved to be an extremely valuable way of finding out how they view their care.

“The feedback has been largely positive, which has been a real boost to staff morale.”

The Trust was the first in the country to launch such a scheme with the Patients Association.

Both organisations have been invited to the PENNA Awards Day and Best Practice Conference at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on 6 February.

NDDH rated best in country for hand and shoulder surgery

The Trust has been rated the best in the country for its record at performing two types of surgery as day cases.

North Devon District Hospital is top of the table for performing specialist surgery to the hand and shoulder and allowing patients to go home the same day.

The results were announced as part of the Audit Commission’s ongoing review into best practice in day surgery.

NDDH was the leading hospital of the 143 that perform arthroscopic subacromial decompressions, which reduce pain in the shoulder.

NDDH carried out 94% of all eligible procedures as day cases in the past year, compared to the national average of 67%.

NDDH was also the best-performing of the 144 hospitals that carry out fasciectomies for Dupuytren’s contracture, which free up movement in the hand.

Against a national average of 77%, NDDH performed 91% of all eligible procedures as day cases.

Cheryl Baldwick, lead clinician in orthopaedics, and Colin Steinlechner are the two NDDH consultants who perform arthroscopic subacromial decompressions.

Miss Baldwick said: “We offer a wide range of hand and shoulder surgery and these are just two examples.

“We have performed fasciectomies as day cases for a number of years but up until four years ago many subacromial decompressions were done as inpatients, involving an overnight stay.

“We know patients undergoing this type of surgery would rather go home the same day, and have worked very hard to ensure we are able to grant this wish more often.”

The table-topping results follow the announcement in October that NDDH was ranked fourth in the country for day case gall bladder surgery and fifth for general surgery, featuring mainly hernia procedures.
Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust

Trust launches community healthcare degree course

The Trust has become the first in the country to offer a degree-level course in community healthcare.

Designed, delivered and evaluated by the Trust’s own specialists, the course aims to develop expert clinical leaders who will ultimately improve the care and experience of patients.

The course, which was launched in October and has 10 candidates, reflects the growing trend for care to be delivered in the patient’s own home rather than in a community hospital.

It also addresses the challenges faced by healthcare providers up and down the country to meet the diverse needs of an ageing population.

Tina Naldrett, the Trust’s assistant director of nursing, is leading the project alongside Darryn Allcorn, assistant director of workforce.

She said: “The launch of this degree course is a very exciting and significant development for the Trust and our staff, but it is our patients who will be the real winners.

“The Trust cares for up to 6,000 people in their own homes at any one time and with a larger pool of expert practitioners in the community, this can only be a good thing for patients and their families.

“The demographics and complexity of patients supported by our community nursing and integrated care teams have changed over the years, and continue to do so.

“To meet these challenges and realise the full potential of community nursing, we need expert practitioners to deliver care, including through higher levels of assessment and autonomous working.

“This course will enable us to equip candidates with high levels of skills that are applied differently to how they would be in a hospital setting.”

The course, entitled Effective Clinical Leadership in Complex Community Environments and run in partnership with moderators at Plymouth University, features two 10-week modules which come to a close in April.

It is initially open to Trust staff who work in a community setting, such as nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, but next year it will be rolled out to other candidates from across the country.

Sidmouth Hospital set to become modern healthcare hub with £1.3million upgrade

Plans to inject £1.3million into Sidmouth Hospital and transform it into a modern healthcare hub have been unveiled.

The Comforts Fund – the hospital’s League of Friends – announced the plans at a reception at the Westcliff Hotel in Sidmouth.

Under the proposals, the hospital will have a new physiotherapy department, rehabilitation unit and gym area as well as an improved front entrance, reception and waiting room.

It represents the fifth and final phase of a 23-year-old programme to upgrade the hospital.

Matron Emma Bagwell said: “This project sees the transition of Sidmouth from a cottage hospital into a vibrant, modern and professional hub of community health and social care.

“This is an exciting time for everyone involved in the project and the local community we serve – our patients will be the real winners.

“These new facilities will enhance the excellent service the hospital already provides, and the flexibility of space reflects the changing face of how we deliver healthcare.

“I cannot thank the Comforts Fund enough for their mammoth fundraising efforts over the years, and we look forward to continuing our association throughout this project and beyond.”

Under the plans:
• The physiotherapy and occupational therapy units will be co-located in the main building alongside the main wards, outpatient area and complex care team
• The kitchen will be moved, helping to create a canopied and more welcoming front entrance
• A single reception and waiting room will be created, ensuring patients can easily navigate the hospital and receive a professional welcome to the building
• The minor injury unit will be moved closer to the main wards, enabling easier access for patients and staff
• The existing physiotherapy building will be demolished, allowing more room for visitor parking

The Comforts Fund has written a letter of intent to pay £750,000 while the Trust has agreed to contribute £200,000.

The reception event in Sidmouth marked the launch of an appeal for the £350,000 needed to complete the project.
Trust’s most senior nurses and midwives provide reassuring presence

Visits by senior nurses and midwives to talk with patients on every ward run by the Trust are proving their value, six months after being introduced.

The system, first used in June 2012, is in line with the ‘six Cs’ set out in December by England’s chief nursing officer Jane Cummings – care, compassion, competence, communication, courage and commitment.

It means each ward at the Trust’s 18 hospitals across Devon is checked regularly by senior nurses including director of nursing Carolyn Mills, assistant directors of nursing Bev Cox and Tina Naldrett and head of midwifery Toby Cooper.

On each visit they speak to patients and staff at random and collate the feedback, which helps to identify trends where further improvements could be made.

Bev Cox, who is leading the project, said: “Seven months on, it is clear the matron walkrounds have had a very positive and reassuring effect on patients.

“Patients appreciate the presence and visibility of a senior nurse and the opportunity to tell them in ‘live’ time about their care, which we can act on immediately.

“The walkrounds have also shown to be very valuable for staff, who know they will have senior nurses present and available on a regular basis, while the matrons themselves have welcomed the opportunity to visit each others’ wards and share best practice.

“This powerful project supports our commitment to providing safe, dignified and compassionate care of the highest standard, and to listening closely to patients and placing them at their heart of their care.”

Patients benefit from new voice amplifiers

The donation of four voice amplifiers is set to enhance the lives of patients with Parkinson’s who have difficulty talking.

The Barnstaple and Torridge branches of Parkinson’s UK have donated two £360 amplifiers each to the speech and language therapy team at North Devon District Hospital.

The amplifiers will be used by patients with Parkinson’s, multiple system atrophy (MSA) and progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP).

Nicola Mathers, speech and language therapist, said: “The amplifiers will make a big difference to patients here in North Devon.

“People with Parkinson’s, MSA and PSP can experience a reduced volume of voice.

“These amplifiers can help increase the volume of their voice, allowing them to communicate more effectively.”

New exercise machines help Tiverton patients improve health and recovery

Patients with a range of conditions are exercising their way to better health and recovery using three specialist machines at Tiverton and District Hospital.

The machines have been specially adapted for people sitting in a wheelchair or lying in their bed, who wouldn’t be able to use a normal exercise bike.

They are ideal for patients recovering from an operation or stroke as well as people with multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, muscular disorders, brain injuries and other conditions.

The first Theravital machine was donated by the League of Friends last year – and it proved so popular that the charity has since bought two more.

Patient Colin Butt exercises on one of the specialist machines at Tiverton and District Hospital, watched by Sally Harmer, a member of the League of Friends management committee, and chairman Arthur Govier.
East Devon’s ‘first-class’ dementia service scoops national award

An innovative Trust service that enhances the lives of older people with dementia in East Devon has secured a prestigious national award.

The Rowan and Linden centres are among only eight winners of an Innovation and Best Practice in Community Hospitals Award for 2012.

The centres, based at Ottery St Mary, provide a safe haven and ongoing support for people with dementia, anxiety or depression or who are socially isolated.

The awards are organised by the Community Hospitals Association (CHA).

Chief executive Barbara Moore, who visited East Devon on a recent fact-finding mission, said: “I was very impressed with what they are doing at Ottery.

“The staff there are excellent and the service and care they provide for dementia patients is first-class.”

The Rowan and Linden team, led by Gaynor Appleby, will collect their award at the CHA’s annual conference at the Marriott Worsley Park Hotel and Country Club in Manchester in May 2013.

Keri Storey, the Trust’s assistant director of health and social care, said: “We were delighted to hear the centres were shortlisted for the award a few weeks ago, but to discover we have won is fantastic news.

“The centres have made a real difference to the lives of older people with dementia and other conditions over the past two years, and the feedback we have received from individuals, carers and families has been very positive.

“Winning the award is testament to the hard work Gaynor and her team have put into helping people live well with dementia.”

The Rowan centre provides a 12-week assessment for individuals, who take part in a variety of activities with help from key workers, while carers and loved ones are given one-to-one support.

The Linden day centre provides activities and ongoing support for individuals and respite for carers.

Sole survivors: Winners put their feet up after six-week STEP Challenge

The winners have been named in the Trust’s STEP Challenge, which saw more than 180 teams logging every pace over a period of six weeks.

The top individual was Steve Guest from the Cookie Crew, South Molton Hospital, who logged 1,231,420 steps.

The runner-up was Bindy Sumner from Supa Stompas, based in the orthopaedics department at NDDH, with 1,130,510.

The champion team was Spring Chickens from pharmacy at NDDH with 3,748,517 steps, followed by the Walker Sisters from Axminster Hospital with 3,495,491.

All receive vouchers for their efforts.

Congratulations to everyone who took part, creating some hot competition and prompting a fair few lifestyle changes.
Listening to our patients

The feedback we receive from patients about their experience under our care is crucial for the Trust.

In recent weeks the board has been listening to more and more accounts from patients, which help us build a clear picture of the things we are doing well and the areas where we could improve.

A new feature in board meetings is Patient Stories, where we see video clips of people giving real-life accounts of their experience and perception of our care, which provide us with a fascinating insight.

The Trust’s pioneering mystery shopper scheme, which is up for a national award (see page 2), enables patients to give anonymous feedback to an independent body which is then passed back to us.

We look at reports of this very informative feedback, which is triangulated with other information the Trust gathers to see if any common themes arise.

Whichever method we use to gain feedback, it helps us identify best practice which can be shared with other departments.

When an area for improvement is found, at any time the board can challenge the executive directors over the local action taken.

Engaging with our staff

Members of the board continue to carry out fortnightly Patient Safety Walkabouts at NDDH and our 17 community hospitals.

Each one is performed by an executive director, a non-executive director and a member of the patient safety team.

They meet staff, who are encouraged to talk openly and honestly about their perception of the services we provide and to offer ideas for improvement.

Board members are also visiting GP practices across the Trust to discuss our plans and developments and invite feedback.

GPs have welcomed these visits, saying they now have a better understanding of our services, and we continue to work closely with them to support patients to live as independently and as near to home as possible.

On a personal level, I decided to spend a day at NDDH observing knee, ankle and hip replacement operations, which was a fascinating experience.

All the patients were treated with great dignity and respect and the teamwork I saw among staff was inspiring.

Foundation Trust latest

Significant progress has been made towards our application to be an NHS Foundation Trust, which all NHS Trusts must become by April 2014.

Working with staff and stakeholders, the board has supported the development of the Trust’s five-year business plan.

Central to this, board members have attended a series of briefing sessions, discussing and challenging the Trust’s Cost Improvement Programme (CIP) and reviewing how the board will monitor performance and progress.

Early this year, the next step in the application process will see our board meet the board of the South West Strategic Health Authority (SHA).

All NHS Trusts go through this process, and the aim is to reassure the SHA we are ready to proceed to Foundation Trust status based on our current performance, five-year strategy and financial position.
Lynton trio earn Queen’s Nurse title

Three community nurses from the same Trust team have won a prestigious national award.

Alison Tyrrell, Amy Lake and Isabel Tomlin, from the Lynton integrated team, have each been given the title of Queen’s Nurse.

They were given their new title by The Queen’s Nursing Institute (QNI) at an awards ceremony at the Commonwealth Club in London.

The title reflects a commitment to high standards of patient care, learning and leadership in community nursing.

New fundraising officer for Chemo Appeal

Julie Whitton has been appointed the new fundraising officer for the Chemotherapy Appeal.

Julie will support fundraising manager Ian Roome in guiding the Appeal from its current total of £1.3 million to the target of £2.2 million.

Julie has worked for the Trust for over 20 years, most recently in its facilities team.

She has a wealth of experience as an event organiser and fundraiser and is well known for co-ordinating a wide range of community activities in Barnstaple and Swimbridge.

“Fundraising and events are my passion and the Chemotherapy Appeal is a charity that is close to my heart,” she said.

Julie can be contacted on 01271 311772 or at julie.whitton@ndevon.swest.nhs.uk.

Christmas Wish upon a Star campaign launched

The Chemotherapy Appeal’s Christmas Wish upon a Star campaign proved a hit among individuals and businesses across North Devon.

The campaign offered an easy alternative to sending Christmas cards, as people downloaded a special poster from the Appeal website and invited friends and colleagues to write a message on one of the stars in return for a donation.

The campaign was launched with the help of this picture by North Devon photographic artist Dave Green, showing NDDH staff and volunteers spelling out the words Chemo Appeal using colourful lighting effects.
Rowan grasps opportunity to become healthcare assistant

A former cleaner and porter at Ottery St Mary Hospital is enjoying his new lease of life as a healthcare assistant. Rowan Catley leapt at the opportunity to move into a clinical role as part of the Trust’s hotel services restructure in its Eastern community hospitals.

Rowan, 26, was a domestic assistant at Ottery for three years before starting his new position on the medical ward at nearby Honiton Hospital on 1 October.

He said: “I love it – every part of it – and I’m keen to stay here. I like helping people.

“I get involved with general patient care, assessments, washing and all sorts.

“It was a great opportunity and I took advantage of it. I was very warmly welcomed and I feel part of a great team.”

Rowan worked in quantity surveying and damp proofing before joining the NHS.

He missed out on a healthcare assistant job in the community about a year ago after reaching final interviews, but has now secured the role he wanted.

Mickie Dicks, matron at Honiton, said: “Rowan is very enthusiastic. He’s been brilliant.

“It’s something he has wanted to do before and he has taken the opportunity with both hands.”

Entry-level NHS Elite Course

We can now offer an online basic computer course open to all staff in our Trust. The course is delivered by e-Learning and can be completed in your own time and at your own speed.

Although this is a basic course, which starts by looking at mouse and keyboard skills, it does take you on to email and word processing skills and is very useful.

To enrol on to the course, go to ESR and into your e-Learning area, then search for ‘Entry Level’.

There are two courses, one for Office 2003 and one for Office 2010.

We recommend 2010 as the Trust will soon be updating the current version of Office.

If you are unsure how to search for a course on ESR, please see the guides and videos on AccessPoint.

If you would prefer to attend a classroom-based basic computer course aimed at the beginner, please look out for our ‘First Steps’ course or contact one of the learning technology administrators on 01271 335759.

AccessPoint

There are now even more ‘how to guides’ and videos on AccessPoint to help you with e-Learning.

The information covers just about everything from changing your password to working your way through an e-Learning course or searching for and enrolling on to a course.

However, if you are having problems and cannot find an answer you have been looking for please let us know by contacting a learning technology administrator.

AccessPoint can be accessed in the Staff area of the Trust’s main website.

Touch Typing British Computer Society (BCS) Qualification

The learning technology department can now offer a nationally-recognised qualification in Touch Typing.

The course is delivered by the training team in partnership with the British Computer Society (BCS).

This course can be used for those wanting to increase their typing speed or become a fully-qualified touch typist. Qualified and experienced typists are also welcome to enrol on this course and obtain the very latest BCS qualification.

No typing experience?! Please don’t worry. This course is designed to run at all levels, so if you can obtain 150 words per minute or just five this course is aimed at you.

You can take the test when you are ready to take it.

Please contact the learning technology department for more details. There is an £18 test fee which must be paid on enrolment.

This is so we can purchase your test from the BCS and so is non-refundable.

This course is massively discounted for NHS staff, saving you over £155 for a professional qualification.