

Shorter waiting times at Dorset County Hospital

DORSET County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust was the first hospital in Dorset to meet the new NHS standard for waiting times.

The new standard came into effect in January and ensures that all patients in the NHS in England will be treated within 18 weeks. At Dorset County Hospital in Dorchester this target was met a month early, and the median wait is now just 11 weeks.

The good results were achieved despite the severe winter pressures, which have affected all South West hospitals. Rupert Wainwright, director of operations at Dorset County Hospital, said:

‘Since December 2008 we have consistently provided treatment within 18 weeks for over 90% of our admitted patients for all specialties.

‘Dorset County Hospital was a leader in the county by achieving treatment in time for every specialty. Our good results show how Dorset County Hospital puts patient care first.

‘These great results have been made possible by the hard work of doctors, nurses, managers and all other staff who have been dedicated and flexible over a very difficult winter and have ensured prompt and safe care for our patients,’ he added.

Waiting times have particularly improved in Orthopaedics where 18 week waiting times consistently reached 90% and above from December.

Health Secretary Alan Johnson said: ‘I would like to congratulate staff at Dorset County Hospital on their fantastic performance against the 18 weeks target, particularly the impressive reduction in waiting times for Orthopaedics.’

The 18 Weeks target was introduced in 2004 in the NHS Plan with a delivery programme starting in 2005. The 18 Week target levels are 90% for admitted patients and 95% for non-admitted patients to allow for patients who do not want to start their treatment within 18 weeks and patients for whom it is clinically appropriate to wait longer. It became the operational standard for the NHS from 1 January 2009.

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