

News Release

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DCH ambulance handover times best in region

Ambulance handover times at Dorset County Hospital are now the quickest in the South West region thanks to an innovative new approach.

The Emergency Department (ED) team have established a Flow Assistance Bay (FAB) which has made a significant difference to how fast patients coming into the department from ambulances can be assessed and treated.

Ambulance crews arriving at DCH now hand over their patients to the care of a dedicated team of nurses, healthcare assistants and clinicians who are on hand 24/7 in a specially designed area of the ED right next to the ambulance entrance.

The new facility ensures patients brought in by ambulance are assessed for appropriate treatment in the fastest time possible, and the more efficient process has also led to reduced waiting times for all other patients coming through the department.

Emergency consultant Dr David Markham developed the FAB, building on the rapid assessment model used in other A&Es, and implemented its introduction prior to the onset of winter pressures with Advanced Nurse Practitioner Rebecca Lovedale.

He explained: “Having a dedicated 24/7 team receiving ambulance patients means that we can assess people and start appropriate treatment as quickly as possible.

“We’ve designed it specifically for our department to get rid of any bottlenecks or delays in the process which has in turn meant that all patients coming into the department can now be seen more quickly, not just patients brought in by ambulance. Our figures for January 2020 showed that the overall average waiting time for triaging (assessing) patients reduced by over 20 minutes.

“Receiving appropriate treatment more quickly leads to improved patient outcomes and the timely handovers mean that ambulance crews can be back out on the road more quickly.”

ED Matron Clare Turnbull said that nursing staff throughout the department have noticed the benefit of the FAB.

She said: “With the department working more efficiently and effectively staff morale has improved with nursing staff feeling less pressured on the whole.

“The feedback we’ve received from patients and their families is also positive with fewer complaints about the time spent in the department and communication issues.”

Dorset County Hospital continues to be one of the top performing hospitals in the country for A&E waiting times, despite continued increases in attendances.

DCH’s Chief Operating Officer Inese Robotham praised the ED team for their efforts to continuously improve the care offered to patients.

She said: “Despite unprecedented pressure on our Emergency Department (ED) we consistently remain well above the national average for A&E four-hour wait performance. This is only possible due to a huge amount of commitment and hard work from staff and we are incredibly grateful for their unwavering dedication to providing the best possible care for our patients.

“The FAB is a fantastic development and a great example of how pioneering new ways of working can benefit our patients.”

ENDS

PHOTO: DCH Emergency Department staff with ambulance service colleagues.

For more information please contact the Dorset County Hospital communications team on 01305 253394 or 254683, or email communications@dchft.nhs.uk