

DELAYED DISCHARGES - POSITION AT 15 APRIL 2006

NHS Lanarkshire has 65 delayed discharges at 15 April 2006. This is within the delayed discharge target of 66 that had to be achieved by 15 April 2006. This is a significant achievement as previous projections had indicated that this target would not be delivered.

Delivery of the target has been achieved through effective partnership working with a robust process in place to identify individual needs of patients on the basis of a community care assessment undertaken on a multi disciplinary and multi agency basis. The process of discharging delayed discharge patients either home or to other community accommodation has, in recent weeks, received increased attention that has facilitated identification of options and solutions. The opportunity has been taken to accelerate access to home care packages to facilitate early discharge and to maximise access to funded care home places across Lanarkshire. Agreements have been reached between Partners to enable patients under 65 years of age to be discharged into appropriate accommodation. Some care home funding has been brought forward from April 2006 to fund placements in March although the extent to which this option has been used is less than in previous years. NHS Lanarkshire has also maximised use of off site beds.

Whilst 65 is the number of delayed discharge patients in the hospital system, it excludes Adults with Incapacity that, at 15 April 2006, numbered 24. This is a significant number of beds that are not available for routine use. At present, there is little that Partners can do to resolve the patient's future placement until the legal process has run its course. This is unsatisfactory both for the patient and the hospital. This has been raised as a significant issue with the Scottish Executive and a meeting is planned for early May 2006 between Partners and the Scottish Executive.

An increasing issue is the number of delayed discharges that include patients under 65 years of age. The numbers in this category are growing and is approaching 10% of the total number of delayed discharges. Many of those patients have mental health problems. Detailed discussions will shortly be initiated between Partners to identify the nature and extent of the problem across Lanarkshire and to examine solutions to enable appropriate care and support to be provided to those patients. The opportunity will also be taken at the meeting in May 2006 with the Scottish Executive to explore the potential for accessing change and innovation monies to enable pilot work to be undertaken in respect of patients in this category.

The Scottish Executive has published details of delayed discharge targets to be achieved by 15 April 2007 and 15 April 2008. The targets are:

- For 2006/07 to reduce all delays over six weeks by 50%
- For 2006/07 to free up 50% of all beds occupied by delayed discharge patients in short term beds
- For 2007/08 to reduce to zero patients delayed over six weeks
- For 2007/08 to reduce to zero those delayed in short stay beds

A meeting will be held in early May 2006 between Partners and the Scottish Executive to discuss the targets for 2006/07 and 2007/08. The number over six weeks has reduced year on year in Lanarkshire from 35 at 15 April 2005 to around 20 at 15 April 2006. The proposal to reduce this by 50% with a target of 10 in 2006/07 would represent one area for discussion. There are also issues around the definition of short stay beds that would benefit from further discussion. The outcome of that meeting will be reported to a future meeting of the NHS Board.

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