

ASSIST Early Hospital Discharge Scheme – reducing bed blocking and improving the transition from hospital to home

In Mansfield and Ashfield integrated working between clinical practitioners, social workers and housing teams has unblocked thousands of beds and saved the NHS £1.4m last year.

"If one were to scale up this work it would be massive across the UK. Savings of this magnitude would go a long way towards funding 7-day secondary care."

Dr Mark Holland, President to the Society for Acute Medicine



Tackling bed blocking head on

As the national epidemic of bed blocking cripples health authorities across the UK, in Mansfield positive action is being taken to work with adults at the point of admission to free up staff time in A&E by signposting people with social needs.

The multi-disciplinary team also works together on the wards of the hospital to identify and work with inpatients who are fit to go home but may need assistance to do so. A reduction in bed blocking and saving medical staff time are integral to this project. But there are additional benefits in the transition and patient aftercare that make the project, including the prevention of homelessness.

"The front door service is essential for our patients. Patient care would be affected if this service was to stop."

Robert Comins, Therapy Team Leader ED/EAU

Saving time and money and improving lives

The project, funded by the district council, county council and CCG has seen real benefits on the wards of Kings Mill Hospital and expedited the transfer of 1,129 patients, reduced bed blocking by 5078 days and saved £1.4m to the NHS locally, in just nine months.

District council housing staff work daily with social care workers and medical professionals at Kings Mill Hospital. Every day they identify vulnerable patients in need of additional support to return home, for example the installation of Life Line, property alterations or temporary accommodation in a dedicated respite unit.

"The integrated discharge team facilitate safe, effective and timely discharges. It is essential that the service continues so that we can work together to facilitate hospital discharges, prevent delays in discharge and help prevent hospital readmission."

Vicky Tilbrook, Discharge Liaison Nurse Specialist

Improving health outcomes for patients

The ASSIST hospital discharge scheme helped some of the most vulnerable patients within the hospital care system. Most cases are a complex combination of social and welfare need and can be solved through early intervention at admission.

ASSIST clearly demonstrates the opportunities in bringing hospital, housing needs and social care into a whole system provision. On hospital wards, this project tackles the national issue of bed blocking with visible results. It has the potential to be emulated across the UK to improve patient care and generate considerable savings to the health and social care budget.

