

MEDIA STATEMENT

Update about temporary change to emergency department at Chorley Hospital

22 April 2016

On Monday 18 April the emergency department at Chorley Hospital was temporarily replaced by an urgent care service. This change was made because Lancashire Teaching Hospitals was not able to staff its emergency departments, and continuing to provide a service in these circumstances is an unacceptable risk to patient safety.

The Urgent Care Centre at Chorley Hospital is open 8am – 8pm seven days a week. So far, an average of 62 patients a day are being seen in the urgent care centre, compared with an average of around 100 patients who previously attended the emergency department in these hours.

Stuart Heys, Chairman of Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said, “The board, and all our staff, along with partner agencies, are absolutely committed to reinstating the emergency department at Chorley as soon as we have the sufficient staff to ensure we can provide a safe and sustainable service, and we are all working hard to make this happen.

“We need at least 14 doctors to safely staff the departments across both hospitals, and currently have a gap of six. Currently we have potentially secured three of the doctors we need, and there are further potential candidates we are actively pursuing.

“Until we are in a position where we can reinstate the emergency department we are doing everything possible to make sure effective interim arrangements are in place so patients in both Chorley and Preston areas receive prompt and safe care - and those arrangements are currently working well.”

Suzanne Hargreaves, Operations Director of Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said, “We’ve been working in partnership with Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust and the GP out of hours service to get the urgent care service up and running quickly in response to the emergency department staffing crisis, and it’s working well. I would like to assure patients that the urgent care centre team includes consultants, GPs and nursing staff, and we are providing prompt, safe and appropriate care. No patients have had to be transferred to Preston as yet as a result of this change, and there have been no patient safety issues.”

“We are continuously liaising with other hospitals in the area to assess any impact of this change. So far it’s been reported that a small number of patients with minor conditions have attended Blackburn Hospital as apparently they didn’t realise the Urgent Care Centre was open, and we have taken action to further publicise the temporary change.

“NWS forecasting data shows that Royal Albert Edward Infirmary in Wigan is the hospital most likely to receive additional patients as a result of the change. The Wigan team confirms that there has been a small increase which has been safely managed so far. They are assessing their capacity and resources to continue to safely manage the extra volumes.”

Dr Graham Ellis, Emergency Medicine Consultant and Clinical Director of Emergency Department at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said, “We have expanded the emergency department and assessment area at Preston to accommodate extra patients, and staff from departments across the hospital are providing additional support. So far there hasn’t been a significant increase in the number of patients attending the department at Preston. We are coping well and managing to see and treat patients promptly and effectively. “This temporary change has not increased the length of time patients are waiting to be seen. Overall, waiting times at both hospitals have in fact improved this week.”

Dr Gora Bangi, Chair of Chorley and South Ribble Clinical Commissioning Group said, “We are closely monitoring any potential impact on attendances at GP practices, however there is no evidence that patients who should be seen by an emergency department are instead seeing their GP.”

Peter Mulcahy, Head of Service at North West Ambulance Service said: “We are working with Lancashire Teaching Hospitals and Chorley and South Ribble Clinical Commissioning group to mitigate the impact of this measure which will see ambulances travelling to other hospitals such as Preston, Wigan, Blackburn and Bolton instead of Chorley. To support this, we are planning, in conjunction with our partners, to have additional ambulances available to support changes in how we deliver both our emergency service and inter hospital transfer service.

“In essence, many of our patients do not need emergency care and could get more appropriate treatment elsewhere, so in the first instance consider alternatives to 999 such as pharmacies, GPs, walk-in centres, self-care or NHS 111. Patients who call 999 and receive a response from the ambulance service will be assessed by our highly skilled clinicians who will agree upon the best plan for their care; this will include the decision on which treatment centre is best for their needs. We currently take many of our patients to urgent care centres (UCCs) across the North West. Chorley will provide this service during designated hours and as such we will still take some patients to Chorley.”

Professor Mark Pugh, Consultant Anaesthetist and Medical Director of Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said, “We are continuing efforts to secure the additional staff we need. We have been sent quite a number of CVs, but unfortunately many of the applicants are simply not qualified for the roles we need. Some of the doctors have only worked in the emergency department environment for a short time, and some don’t have the necessary checks in place to ensure they are able to provide safe care for our patients. We have requested further information about several CVs, and are actively pursuing a number of potential applications. We are also continuing all of our other recruitment activities. However we won’t appoint any staff who are unsuitable or unqualified as we will not compromise patient safety.”

Karen Partington, Chief Executive of Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said, “An emergency department needs to be staffed by appropriately qualified, trained and experienced staff to deliver safe patient care. “We’ve had conversations with colleagues at the local barracks because we already provide some training for their medics - however they do not have the right kind of doctors available that we need. “We have requested advice from NHS England about the feasibility and process for accessing national armed services support. NHS England advises that such an application for support would constitute a Military Aid to Civilian Authorities request, which is a last resort and would only be considered when all other options have been exhausted. NHS England advises that as plans are in place to maintain a safe and effective service, and discussions are continuing, such a request is therefore currently not appropriate. NHS England also advises that military personnel are no longer based in military hospitals, but are reservists within NHS district general hospitals, so providing military support would involve taking medics from other hospitals around the country.”

Ian Crossley, from Chorley & South Ribble Clinical Commissioning Group, said “Together we are continuing to monitor and review the situation on a weekly basis. The group met again on Wednesday and the staffing position has not improved sufficiently to enable the emergency department to be reinstated safely. However we all remain committed to resuming the service as quickly as possible, and are continuing to work hard to secure the additional staff required. We will continue to meet regularly to review the situation and will let everyone know as soon as there is any change.”

Notes to editors

The local System Resilience Group comprises Chorley & South Ribble Clinical Commissioning Group, Greater Preston Clinical Commissioning Group, Lancashire Care Foundation Trust, Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and North West Ambulance Service.

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Notes to Editors: For further information contact Helen Lea, Communication and Public Relations Officer, helen.lea@lthtr.nhs.uk 01772 523515.

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust provides district general hospital services to a local community of 390,000, and specialist services to 1.5m across Lancashire and South Cumbria. Services are provided from Royal Preston Hospital, Chorley and South Ribble Hospital and the Specialist Mobility and Rehabilitation Centre, as well as a wide range of services in community settings and at other hospitals in the region.