

Update for Wiltshire Area Boards

June 2023

Virtual wards

Patients across Wiltshire as well as those in Bath and North East Somerset and Swindon are now able to receive acute clinical care in their own homes through an initiative called NHS@Home Virtual Wards.

NHS@Home Virtual Wards is jointly provided across BSW by BSW Integrated Care Board, Wiltshire Health and Care, the Royal United Hospital, Great Western Hospital, HCRG Care Group and other local health and care organisations.

The service supports suitable patients to receive a high level of care, assessment, monitoring and treatment at home or their normal place of residence, similar to being an inpatient in a hospital ward.

NHS@Home Virtual Wards, which is also sometimes known as Hospital at Home, provides a range of interventions from a team of doctors, nurses, paramedics and therapists and other healthcare professionals who assess patients both remotely and face-to-face as required to provide clinical advice and treatment.

Patients who are assessed as being suitable for being cared for in their own homes may be referred to the service by their doctor or other healthcare professional. Members of the NHS@Home Virtual Wards team will schedule regular visits, dependent on individual needs, to deliver the treatment and care required. Patients also have access to advice and support outside of their visits.

Treating people in their own homes can be beneficial as patients will not be waiting around in Accident and Emergency departments for a long time before starting their treatment and are also less likely to decondition through long periods in bed as they may do on a hospital ward.

The programme also presents some tangible benefits for under-pressure hospitals as it helps to free up beds during periods of intense pressure and means patients are much more involved in their own care.

Across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire over 1,200 patients have been admitted to a virtual ward and a similar number have been discharged.

Wiltshire hospitals recognised for their commitment to carers

Two hospitals in Wiltshire have been given awards by local VCSE group Carer Support Wiltshire to recognise excellent levels of support for carers on hospital wards and outpatient departments.

Great Western Hospital in Swindon earned the award for its main outpatient department and Wiltshire Health and Care for its wards at Chippenham, Warminster, and Savernake community hospitals.

There are over 42,000 unpaid carers in Wiltshire and the NHS depends on the vital contribution they make by looking after family members and friends. Carers play a key role in providing support to others; enabling and facilitating outpatient appointments, earlier patient discharge from hospital, and helping to prevent re-admissions.

Both wards received a Silver Award which recognises their considerable commitment to carers by developing a series of practical ideas to improve how they can better identify, and support carers of all ages.