

Statement

May 23, 2008

Gosport War Memorial Hospital

There have been enormous changes made to Gosport War Memorial Hospital since the then Commission for Health Improvement identified concerns about in-patient services that were delivered at the hospital as far back as 1997.

The NHS has introduced a range of new clinical policies and practices to ensure that care is safe and of the highest quality. The introduction of these new policies were checked and approved by the independent regulator back in 2002 and have been operating successfully ever since.

The NHS also invested £6.5 million to create a facility that is very different to the hospital that was subject to concerns 10 years ago. The hospital now provides more rehabilitative care which supports patients who need care for short periods of time and means they spend less time in acute hospitals.

Both Hampshire Primary Care Trust and Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust would like to reassure local people and patients that they can be assured of the highest quality care at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

In the 10 years since the police investigation no further investigations into the quality of the care provided at Gosport War Memorial Hospital have had to be carried out.

Since the 2002 investigation and the introduction of new clinical procedures, the level of clinical incidents has been entirely normal for a hospital of this size.

Patient and their carers regularly compliment and thank the hospital for the care received and the level of complaints at the Hospital is low. For example in the last year Hampshire PCT received 244 formal complaints and only three of these were about Gosport War Memorial Hospital. The PCT also has a Patient and Advice Liaison Service (PALS) and in the last year this hasn't received any concerns about the hospital or the care it provides.

From October 2006 the care on the wards at Gosport War Memorial Hospital has been provided by Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust. The Trust actively encourages patients and the carers to raise any issues of concern at the time so that they can be addressed immediately. During 2006/07 378 patients were cared for at the wards at Gosport and only five such issues were raised with Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust. Most of these were informal complaints that were made verbally. During 2007/08 389 patients were cared for at the wards at Gosport and again only five complaints were received, most of which were informal and made verbally. The number of complaints received is far outweighed by the number of compliments and thanks from patients cared for and their relatives.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Concerns raised and the action taken

The Commission for Health Improvement conducted an investigation at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in 2001/02 regarding some serious concerns about services that had been delivered in 1997/98 at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. It is important to note that the Commission concluded that by 2002 policies and procedures were in place to ensure safe standards of care at the hospital:

- There were insufficient local prescribing guidelines in place governing the prescription of pain relieving and sedative medicines.
 - During its investigation the Commission saw evidence that the trust had introduced and was ensuring staff adhered to policies regarding the prescription, administration, review and recording of medicines. This included;
 - The introduction of a policy, produced jointly with Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust in March 1998. The policy covered the purposes, scope, responsibilities and requirement for prescription writing, medicines administered at nurses' discretion and controlled drugs.
 - A separate policy covering the administration of intravenous medicines was also introduced in 1998.
 - The introduction of a third policy in April 2001 for the assessment and management of pain, in collaboration with Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust.

- The lack of a rigorous, routine review of pharmacy data led to high levels of prescribing on wards caring for older people not being questioned.
 - The trust established a system for the routine monitoring and auditing of controlled drugs prescribed on the wards in 2003. This included an analysis of this data so an investigation could be started if sudden changes were apparent.

- The absence of adequate trust wide supervision and appraisal systems meant poor prescribing practice was not identified.
 - During its investigation the Commission found that clear accountability and supervisory arrangements were in place for trust doctors, nurses and allied health professional staff.
 - Since April 2000, in line with national requirements, clinical staff at Gosport War Memorial Hospital have had regular appraisals.

- There was a lack of thorough multidisciplinary total patient assessment to determine the needs on admission.
 - In 2000 the trust increased the cover provided by elderly medicine consultants at the Hospital from two sessions a week to 10.
 - The trust also increased the day-to-day medical support by replacing a clinical assistant post with a staff grade physician who was supervised by the consultants.
 - In 1998 the consultants undertook a ward round fortnightly; by 2000 this had been increased to a weekly ward round with the staff grade doctor.

- The Commission saw a multidisciplinary meeting during their visit and noted good progress being made towards developing team working.
- Relatives expressed serious concerns to the Commission about the care received by their relatives between 1998 and 2001.
 - During its investigation in 2002, the Commission observed the wards and reviewed recent case notes. Following this, it didn't have significant concerns regarding the nursing care provided to patients.
- Relatives expressed concern around a perceived lack of nutrition and fluids as patients neared the end of their lives. They were also concerned about the perception that every patient was catheterised on admission.
 - The trust conducted a trust wide audit of minimal nutritional standards between October 1997 and March 1998, as part of the national strategy 'Feeding People'. The trust then introduced a policy for the prevention and management of malnutrition in 2000 and this included the designation of an appropriately trained lead person in each clinical area, who would organise training programmes for staff and improve documentation to ensure full compliance. A second review in 2000 concluded that the implementation of the 'Feeding People' standards had been "very encouraging".
 - The Commission reviewed recent case notes during its investigation and concluded that appropriate recording of patient intake and output was taking place.
 - The Commission's case note review found no evidence of inappropriate catheterisation of patients.

Staff support

The trust encouraged staff involved in the investigations at Gosport War Memorial Hospital to use the trust's counselling services and support sessions for staff were organised. Staff have had a high level of support from their professional bodies, including the Royal College of Nursing and UNISON.

It is important to note that many of the nursing and clinical staff working at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in 1998 have retired and several have left the hospital as part of the natural movement of staff. It is a tribute to the professionalism of all of the staff who have worked at the hospital over the last 10 years that they have not allowed the pressure of either the Police and other investigations, or the media attention, to distract them from providing high quality care for patients.

Hampshire PCT has provided a full staff support scheme for its entire staff (over 3,500 individuals) since January 2008. This replaced local arrangements and ensures staff from across the PCT can access the same service. This service costs approximately £70,000 per annum.

For further information please contact the Communications Team on 023 8062 7461.