Firming up arrangements

This is the third in a series of bulletins reporting on work to support the transfer of Accident and Emergency Department services from Belfast City Hospital on 1 November.

The need to close the City Hospital’s A&E unit on a temporary basis arose from a gap in medical staffing which could not be filled – despite a national and international recruitment drive.

The aim is to ensure that in dealing with this problem – through a series of new arrangements – service to patients will not only be changed but improved.

For example arrangements include a facility for GPs to get direct access to an Acute Assessment Unit at the City Hospital on behalf of patients who don’t need access to an A&E department – but do need further medical assessment.

Another positive is that there will now be a minor injuries service concentrated on two sites rather than three – the Royal and the Mater.

Patients requiring to be admitted from A&E will continue to be admitted to beds on three hospital sites – the Royal, Mater or City.

This enables the Belfast Trust acute service to continue to operate as one hospital service operating across three sites.

The existing two A&E departments are being changed to support the temporary change. For example, the A&E department in the Mater Hospital has been reorganised to provide four new short stay beds and an additional four patient cubicles. The Royal A&E Department will have an additional 9-bedded Clinical Unit.

Support from GPs

A number of meetings have been held with GPs in Belfast who have supported and assisted the Trust in developing the arrangements for direct referral to the Acute Assessment Unit at Belfast City Hospital. Further meetings are planned.
Close working with the Ambulance Service
The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service has dedicated personnel and ambulances to assist in the smooth transfer of patients across the Belfast Acute service – after a decision has been made to admit a person to hospital. This work is progressing well in close partnership with our colleagues in the Ambulance Trust.

Getting their bearings
Arrangements for the redeployment of staff, currently based in the Emergency Department in the Belfast City Hospital, are being finalised. The transfer arrangements, including orientation and induction, are already underway. We know that the place where people work is important to them and staff have been very flexible and helpful in supporting the temporary arrangements to deliver patient care through our other Emergency Departments. Many thanks to all involved.

Cleaning and security services
Cleaning and security services at the Mater and Royal A&E departments have been enhanced to ensure the smooth running of both departments under the new arrangements.

Informing the Public
A comprehensive public information campaign is underway to tell people that the A&E department at the City Hospital will close from 1 November. The campaign includes radio, newspaper and public transport advertisements, electronic signage for drivers and posters at key sites.

Remember that if someone becomes unwell they can access medical care at:

Their GP Surgery
Their GP Out of Hours Centres

North & West Belfast 028 9074 4447 (BELDOC)
South & East Belfast 028 9079 6220 (SEBDOC)

Corporate Communications, Nore Villa, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Belfast.