

Hospital Discharge in West Kent

A Healthwatch Kent Impact Report



Hospital Discharge in West Kent

The story so far

You told us about your experiences of being discharged from hospital in West Kent. Many of your stories talked about waits for medication, confusion about when you would be discharged and issues around getting care at home

In 2017, we spoke in depth to 89 people about their recent experience of being discharged from both Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Hospitals.

We made a number of recommendations based on your experiences. We've heard from the hospitals about what they have done since to improve your experience of being discharged from hospital.

Healthwatch Kent has been working to *make your voice count*

The challenge



The feedback you gave us needed to reach the ears of decision makers.

Reaching decision makers

The Hospital

Our report and our findings were received very warmly by the hospitals which are run by the Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Hospital Trust.

The Chief Nurse and the Lead for Hospital Discharge met with us during our visits but also since, to discuss our findings and talk about what they could do better.

This is what they told us they have done so far:

Our recommendation	What has been done
Reduce the delays in discharge	Figures show that the amount of time patients wait to be discharged has reduced. The discharge lounges are better used and more patients are discharged before lunchtime. To address the issue of patients

	<p>waiting for their medication, the hospital has proposed a ‘man in a van’ scheme to deliver medications to people at home rather than having them wait at the hospital for them.</p>
<p>Closer working between hospital staff and transport service</p>	<p>Whilst there are still some issues here, the transport service is working better with hospital staff. The transport team have ‘floor walkers’ that work with hospital staff to deliver smoother discharges. The Hospital also have their own transport system to provide a backup service</p>
<p>Involve carers more</p>	<p>Carers support staff are based in the hospitals and physically sit with the discharge team. When carers are</p>

	identified they are referred directly to the Carers Support team
Adequate provision should be in place for East Sussex residents.	The hospital team have a weekly conference call with East Sussex social services to expedite the discharge of patients back to East Sussex. However, there are still not enough services in East Sussex, which means some patients do stay in hospital longer than they need to. The availability of care home beds and care packages in East Sussex continues to be an issue for the hospital as do the differing Continuing Healthcare timeframes compared to Kent
The health and social care system must work better together	Hospital staff felt there is much closer working with social care colleagues than previously. Kent

	<p>County Council staff are co-located at the hospital and have daily conversation about those patients who are waiting to be discharged and who need social care support.</p>
<p>Discharge paperwork to be completed electronically and timely</p>	<p>This remains a challenge and is not always done electronically.</p>
<p>Level of physiotherapy to be reviewed</p>	<p>The hospital told us that the number of physiotherapists has increased since our visits. Staff took part in Pyjama Paralysis week to highlight the importance of patients getting dressed in their own clothes every day to promote independence and movement. The campaign was a big success and patients' mobility has improved.</p>

<p>Communicate with families about the impact on patients staying in hospital longer than they need to.</p>	<p>Linked to the Pyjama Paralysis above, staff talk to patients and families about muscle wastage and deconditioning which is caused by patients staying in a hospital bed longer than they need to.</p>
<p>A better system to be developed when people need to make space for equipment at home.</p>	<p>The Hospital is working with District Councils to support families who need help to make adjustments at home which enable the patient to be discharged. For example, they have a ‘man with a van’ who comes to the house to move furniture.</p> <p>Health and Housing also work alongside each other on each site to support homeless patients to find suitable housing.</p>

The commissioner

West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group who commission hospital services at both Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Hospitals have been informed about our findings and have been supportive of the improvements that the hospital has been making.

Politicians

It is important that politicians hear about the experiences of their constituents. We have shared the findings of our report with District & County Councillors as well as local MPs.

GP Practices

We know that GPs are seeing many patients who have recently been discharged from hospital. We made sure our report, its findings and our recommendations were shared with them.

Social services

We invited staff from Kent County Council to join our discussions with the Hospital, but they have not been involved to date. We will use this report

to highlight the importance of working together to improve services for West Kent residents.

What's changed as a result?

- The experiences of patients and families has been heard by decision makers
- More patients are being discharged quicker from hospital
- Support is now available to help patients and families who need to make space for medical equipment before they can return home from hospital
- More physiotherapy is provided within the hospitals
- The discharge lounges are better used
- More patients are discharged before lunchtime

Your voice has made a difference

It starts with you.....tell us your story

**Call us for free on 0808 801 0102 or email
info@healthwatchkent.co.uk**

What next?

What else needs to be done

Your views: We will continue to share your experiences of being discharged from hospital and to raise your voice

Commitments: we will continue to seek an audience with Kent County Council to understand what improvements are being made

Review: we will re-visit the Discharge lounges to talk to patients directly about their experience

Making your voice count

Sign up for our newsletter to receive regular updates

Make your voice heard ; share your experience

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