

HOSC Briefing Paper Choose Well, Winter Communications Plan

Winter communications plan for Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth (SHIP).

Introduction

Demand for urgent care services is high all year round, but particular pressure is expected during winter and across the bank holidays. The NHS has a responsibility to help local people help themselves, and the NHS, by making best use of their local health and social services. To achieve this, local people need information that will help them make the right choices about their health and care. Easy access to such information is particularly important over the Christmas and New Year period, as this can help reduce public demand upon emergency and out of hours services.

Therefore a winter communications plan has been developed across SHIP. The campaign will be led and delivered locally by PCT communications leads and co-ordinated across both a SHIP and South Central area level. The Choose Well campaign has links with winter planning, flu vaccination and other campaigns to reduce need for urgent care services, eg alcohol/safer drinking.

Aims

The communications strategy supports the national NHS winter campaign, Choose Well. The campaign aims to improve public awareness and understanding of the full range of healthcare options available to them and how to access them, when to use them and how to use them responsibly. The communications strategy has two main aims:

- to help reduce pressure on health services in the SHIP Cluster region during the winter months by encouraging staff and the public to have the flu vaccination and use health services appropriately.
- to ensure an effective communications service is maintained during the winter months and supports services to reduce pressure on health services.

General messages for the public

Communications will focus on using a wide variety of channels to target the population throughout the winter period alongside shorter bursts of activity at certain key points, predicting high demand at half term, Christmas and New Year. The campaign will respond to reported pressures locally and communications support will be aligned to local health system resilience planning teams.

Key messages will be developed, tailored and used appropriately and consistently in communications activity. Messages will be under the following themes:

- Serious symptoms that should be treated at the Emergency Department without delay
- Using the emergency department for non emergencies could put more seriously ill patients at risk
- There is expertise across the health service
- The emergency department is busy, it may be quicker to be seen in other places
- Locations/contact details for each option
- Advice is available if you are unsure

- Being prepared to self care
- Unnecessary Emergency Department use costs the NHS money

Local activity in Portsmouth

The following activities are planned or have been undertaken in Portsmouth:

- Attendance at a number of public events, including the Christmas lights switch on at Commercial Road, events in Gunwharf and the new St Mary's Hospital Campus open days
- Targeted information for families and child health included in school book bags in all primary schools across the City.
- Additional posters and leaflets delivered to each GP practice in the City and advertising via the GP surgery information screens.
- Local radio advertising including Express FM and Heart Radio, Portsmouth FC matchday programmes and on Portsmouth Buses
- Advertising in Flagship and Age UK carers handbook
- Social media activity through the PCT website, Twitter and Facebook pages
- Pack of stories and media resources made available to The News to include information on self care for colds and flu, stocks of medicines, care for burns and falls to run campaigns throughout December.

Additional Urgent Care initiatives to support delivery and demand over winter

In addition to the winter communications plan the PCT commissioning team is working with the Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group, Portsmouth Hospitals Trust (PHT), Solent Health Care and Portsmouth City Council to improve access to primary and community services as an alternative to hospital admission where appropriate and to reduce demand on urgent care services, as well as undertaking a system management role to better manage capacity to meet expected increases in demand throughout the winter period. Examples of improvements in services include:

- Strengthening the GP Out of Hours service at Queen Alexandra Hospital(QAH) through introduction of a primary care nurse in the Emergency Department.
- Implementation of an Older Person's Assessment Service to enable faster access to consultant geriatrician service, Older Person's Mental Health(OPMH) services and specialist assessment to reduce unnecessary hospital admission for older people
- Increasing the capacity of the Portsmouth Rehabilitation and Re-ablement team and other community services such as nursing home liaison service to work with GPs to support people in their own homes.
- Working with ambulance services to ensure they have access to care plans for people with a long term condition such as diabetes or respiratory condition so crews have a better understanding of a person's normal condition, enabling them to work with GPs and community teams to continue to manage the person at home where this is appropriate.
- Weekly partnership meetings to monitor increases in demand and ensure robust operational capacity plans are in place and ensure organisations and services are working together to relieve areas of pressure.

Jo York, Associate Director
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