

MOVING FROM HOSPITAL INTO A CARE HOME

YOUR CHOICES

In planning and arranging discharge from hospital the aim is always to ensure that patients are able to return home if at all possible. Only if that is not possible will other options for supported care, including a care home, be considered.

This leaflet provides information on the process followed where a patient has been assessed as needing care in a Care Home – either residential care or nursing care.

The National Assistance Act 1948 (Choice of Accommodation) Directions 1993 concern the rights of individuals to choose where they receive residential care. Guidance has been issued to Local Authorities and to the NHS on how they must meet their responsibilities relating to choice of accommodation. This leaflet provides you with information on this. It should be read together with any additional local information or local leaflet produced by the Local Authority and Local Health Board.

Who is this leaflet for?

The leaflet is for anyone who may need to move from hospital into a care home. Friends, family, carers and those who work in advocacy services or the care sector may also find this leaflet useful.

What happens when the decision is made that you need to move from hospital into a care home?

Moving into a care home from hospital is a major change in anyone's life. Both the NHS and the local authority have responsibilities in making sure this process happens properly. The NHS is responsible for your discharge arrangements from hospital, whilst the local authority is responsible for post hospital care, if you have assessed needs that require support. Managing this process requires both organisations to work together to make sure your needs are safely met. Social workers and hospital staff will therefore help you to make important choices and provide you with information about making a move to a care home at the point when it appears that this is a real possibility. They will inform you of the local hospital discharge protocol and give you information on what you should expect to happen and on the options that are available to you. You should be given comprehensive information on the range of care homes available in your area and advised on likely availability, waiting times and on costs. You will also be advised on how to obtain inspection reports from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales – these reports will provide you with useful information on findings of inspections and on the services care homes may offer.

What if I don't think I should be discharged from hospital?

Unnecessary time spent in hospital can affect your health and well-being and lead to lower skills, confidence and independence. The decision on whether you are ready for discharge from hospital will have been taken by a number of professionals working in partnership with you to ensure your needs are met. If, however, you believe that a decision to discharge you is not appropriate, the first thing to do would be to discuss this with the people who have made the decision and with your care manager or care co-coordinator. If after doing so you are still of the view that discharge is inappropriate then you should inform the Ward Sister and your social worker so that they can arrange for another assessment of your needs to be undertaken. If this further assessment indicates your needs are more safely met within another location, then staff will work with you to discuss and agree your options for further care - you will not be able to remain in hospital. To do so could place you at greater risk of further illness or injury, and could lead to long term impacts on your independence.

How do I choose a care home?

When it is agreed that you need to move into a care home, you will have the chance to make several choices of care home, from those homes that either have available capacity or are expecting a vacancy within the next few weeks. It is not always possible to offer a wide selection of homes for various reasons – for example if you live in a rural area where the number of homes may be limited, or if the team caring for you have reached the conclusion that you require a level of care that can only be met in a limited number of care homes. When you have made your choice(s), social work staff will try to get you a place in one of the care homes that you have chosen. Normally, a place will be found in one of these homes within two weeks of the decision to discharge you from hospital. It may be appropriate for you to have a trial visit to ensure the care home is able to meet your needs. If you wish this to be considered please ask the social worker who is managing your care.

How long should the move to a care home take?

Once it has been agreed that you no longer require in-patient care the process to discharge you from hospital will take place as soon as is possible. You will be kept informed of the likely date of discharge and how the discharge process is progressing by the person co-coordinating your care. Ensuring discharge happens as soon as it is appropriate helps to protect your independence and to ensure you are not exposed to any risks that might occur due to an inappropriately long stay in hospital.

What if the care homes I choose are full?

If no place is likely to be available in your preferred care home choice(s) within two weeks of your being declared ready for discharge, the Local Authority will look at the availability of other affordable care home places. In the event that an alternative placement is found, it will help you to move into this as an interim choice care home. This would normally happen within three weeks of your being declared ready for discharge. You would remain on the waiting lists for the care homes you originally selected, if that is what you want. The Local Authority does not directly manage the waiting lists of care homes it does not run, but staff will endeavor to keep you informed of the local situation.

The Local Authority will try to ensure that you do not make more than one interim move if the care home(s) of your choice is (are) full. Although this interim placement may not be your first home of choice, it is important that your needs are met in the most appropriate location as soon as possible.

Waiting in hospital for a vacancy is not appropriate – it may lead to risks to your independence and well being.

What if I want to stay in the interim care home?

If you have been placed in an interim choice care home and decide that you would prefer to stay there, the Local Authority will try to ensure that this is possible. In some circumstances this may not be possible.

What if the care home is a long distance away from my family or friends?

If you move into an interim placement that is some distance away from your care home of choice, your family, friends and carers may face significant additional travel costs to reach you. Local agreements between Local Authority and NHS partners may in some cases provide financial assistance. This should be explained in their local leaflet.

Where can I obtain help or advice?

Health and social work staff will be able to offer help and advice to you throughout this process, as well as directing you to other local sources of assistance, such as advice and information leaflets produced by various charities, and the process to obtain independent advocacy. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales will be able to provide information about the care homes in your area.

Will I have to pay for my care?

Dependent upon your financial circumstances, you may be required to pay all or part of the costs of your care. Your local authority will be able to help and advise you of the specific position, based upon your own personal circumstances.

If you are funding your own care costs, you will be offered the same advice, guidance and assistance on care home choice as someone who is fully or partly public funded. If you choose not to accept this advice, guidance and assistance from the Local Authority, you will be expected to make your own arrangements for post hospital care. In this situation the NHS is expected to ensure that you are discharged from the hospital within two weeks, so as not to affect other people's treatment.

If the local authority is responsible for funding your care, but you choose to reside in a home that charges a higher fee than the local authority would usually pay in order to meet your needs, you or your relatives may be asked to provide a contribution to the overall fee. This is known as a "top up" arrangement. Again, your local authority will be able to advise you on whether this applies in your circumstances.

If you are assessed as being eligible for NHS Continuing Health Care, your costs will be met by the NHS. A separate information leaflet provides more detail on this subject.

What happens if I am unhappy with any aspect of my care or placement?

Both the NHS and local government have complaints processes that will help you to raise concerns about any aspect of your care and/or arrangements for your care. As a first step, you are encouraged to raise these concerns at the earliest opportunity with the staff that you are already in touch with within the NHS and/or local authority— often a concern or complaint can be addressed in this way. If you remain concerned then there are formal ways to raise this and to ask for your concerns to be looked at through the NHS or Social Services Complaints Procedures. You or your representatives are entitled to receive a copy of the complaints procedure on request.

References:

WG (2011) Supplementary Guidance to WHC 2004(066): Procedures when discharging patients from hospital to a care setting. (Annex A: Moving from hospital into a care home—your choices (Information Leaflet)