

PE1471/X

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Andrew Howlett
Public Petitions Committee
T3.40
Scottish Parliament
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Your Ref
Our Ref CC/DA/PE1471/031013

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Dear Mr Howlett

Consideration of Petition PE1471 - Young People's Hospital Wards

Please accept my apologies for the late response to your request for comment on the petition advocating young people's hospital wards. We do consider this an important issue and our comments are attached.

Yours sincerely,

Calum Campbell
Chief Executive

Consideration of Petition PE1471 - Young People's Hospital Wards

Response to Question 1

What are your views on what the petition seeks i.e “*Hospitals in Scotland should have specific young persons wards or rooms for adolescents*” and the discussions that took place when the petition was considered at the meeting on 1 March 2013?

Borders General Hospital is fully supportive of the fact that adolescents have distinctive and different needs from both child and adult patients. The NHS Borders Child Health Department have adopted a flexible approach to the age limit for admission to the children's ward, admitting young people when required up to the age of 16 years as standard, and up until the age of 18 years when they have complex health needs and require the care they still receive from their consultant paediatrician during their transition from child to adult services. In addition, the children's ward will admit 16 year olds from adult wards who are receiving care from adult physicians, if required.

The children's ward provides dedicated rooms for adolescents and these are separate from the babies, toddlers and younger children's areas, so that young people are not put next to crying babies, for example. The environment and décor in these rooms is aimed at the older child or young person. The hospital play assistant provides a range of activities for all ages and would offer support which is age appropriate. Recreation such as games consoles, television and books are available.

The ward is small and can accommodate up to 10 infants, children and young people. While appreciating and understanding the advantages of implementing an adolescent friendly nursing model and ward routine for young people receiving in patient healthcare, it is therefore very challenging to provide completely separate facilities, but staff are committed to making the available resources meet the needs of young people as far as possible.

In 2012/13, there were 717 discharges of young people between the ages of 16 to 21 from an adult ward. This is obviously a concern as there is limited opportunity to dedicate specific rooms for young people and maintain patient flow.

If a young person is assessed as being in need of care in a children's ward then this would happen following discussion on an individual basis.

Occasionally, it is necessary to care for a young person under the age of 16 years in an adult ward, particularly if they are under the influence of substances and have been assessed as a risk to others. In this situation however, the young person would remain under the care of a consultant paediatrician in order to fully meet that young person's needs and any child protection issues addressed as a priority.

Recreational facilities are still available to the child, supplied by the children's ward, with input from the play assistant if required. The change in lengths of stay in hospital, ambulatory care and the philosophy of keeping children and young people out of hospital

wherever possible has changed the way in which schooling is delivered, contact with a member of school staff or home now being the norm.

We have different visiting regulations for child and adult wards in the hospital with open visiting in the children's ward and more regulated times in the adult wards. These regulations are flexible in the case of children on adult wards to ensure particularly when a young person has special needs. Numbers of visitors are restricted in both areas.

Some specialist services, such as the diabetes service, have transition clinics. Part of NHS Borders Transition Policy focuses on introducing young people with complex health needs to the adult services in anticipation of future admissions. Young people in an adult ward under the care of an adult physician will not have to wait longer to be seen than adults, but this may be the case when a patient of any age is cared for out of their specialist area.

The meeting on the 1st March quoted the document "Better Health, Better Care: Hospital services for children and young people" report, in which NHS boards were to be asked to "Review the pattern and volume of adolescent admissions to identify opportunities for creating adolescent facilities." NHS Borders is currently developing its Clinical Strategy and will consider what type of care and facilities are available for young people as part of this work.

The small numbers of young people requiring inpatient care does make it challenging to justify a separate unit.

What specialised training is given to staff treating or working with adolescents and young people in the NHS in Scotland?

All registered nurses in the children's ward are on the children's section of the NMC register and they receive training in the care of children and young people from birth to adolescence. We also have a team of advanced nurse practitioners supporting the services.

All healthcare professionals in children and adult services are signed up to involving the individual and family in decisions related to their care and treatment. However, due to the small numbers, there will be differences in the way adult services and children and young person's services communicate with young people. Medical staff are sometimes exposed to young people's services during paediatric placements in their training.