



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

To:

NHS Chief Executives
Chief Operating Officers
Directors of Therapies

LA Chief Executives
Directors of Social Services
All Wales Heads of Adult Services

11 July 2023

Dear Colleagues,

Reluctant Discharge Guidance: The Management of Reluctant Discharge/ Transfer of Care to a More Appropriate Care Setting

Recent years have seen unprecedented demand on our health and social care sectors. To continue providing the best possible services, both health and social care partners have a responsibility to appropriately manage their resources to ensure that they can best provide a full range of services for those who need them. Transferring or discharging a person to a more appropriate setting releases acute capacity for those in need of that level of care and treatment and maintains system flow and balance. In recognition of this we have developed and implemented guidance to support individuals to leave hospital, when they no longer need to be there, and to access services to meet any identified ongoing care and support needs.

However, there are occasions where a person may, for a range of reasons, decline to participate in the process of transferring to the next stage of care, which can lead to significantly extended lengths of stay. These instances are generally low in number, but remaining in hospital longer than is necessary can present significant risks to an individual. These issues can range from deconditioning associated with loss of independence and exposure to risks, such as hospital acquired infections and falls. Therefore, it is vital to ensure care and support, to meet assessed needs, is provided in the most appropriate setting and without delay.

Guidance has been developed that provides health boards and partners with information to support the management of individuals who decline to participate in either the discharge planning process or the transfer to a more appropriate care setting. The guidance can be accessed here:

<https://primarycareone.nhs.wales/tools/six-goals-for-urgent-and-emergency-care/six-goals-for-urgent-and-emergency-care-toolkit/six-goals-for-urgent-and-emergency-care-toolkit/reluctant-discharge-guidance-eng-v1-2-pdf/>

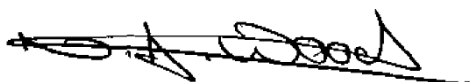
Understanding what matters to the person and why they are choosing to decline participation is key. The individual should be kept fully informed and involved in all discussions relating to their next stage of care, as well as on the risks of remaining in hospital. It is anticipated each health board will have detailed discharge policies in place that have been developed and are delivered with their local authority partners.

This guidance is not intended to duplicate, or fully supplant, any existing local discharge policy arrangements. Instead, it is expected that local arrangements are in place that deliver timely and effective discharge or transfer to another care setting.

Delivering on these requirements will minimise the threats to independence that a prolonged hospital stay can bring and ensure all partners are able to use their resources to best effect.

Can we ask that this guidance is disseminated to appropriate teams within your organisation and that you support its application.

Yours sincerely,



Nick Wood
Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Wales



Albert Heaney CBE
Chief Social Care Officer for Wales