

# Your stay in hospital

## Information for patients with dementia, their family and carers

This leaflet is intended to provide you, your carer, relatives and friends with information about your hospital stay. Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust is committed to ensuring that patients with dementia, and their carers, have a positive hospital experience. Both hospitals have signed up as **dementia friendly hospitals**.

We will recognise and respect your individual needs and are committed to providing **person-centred care**. Person-centredness is a term that is becoming increasingly familiar in health and social care; it describes a standard of care that ensures the patient is at the centre of care delivery. It is underpinned by values, beliefs, understanding and respect for people and their individual rights, and encourages shared decision making with the person, their family and carers.

### Care in hospital wards

At Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust we have **speciality based wards** so admission will be to the most appropriate ward for the condition you are being admitted for. Hospital environments can be disorientating and frightening for a person with dementia, and may make them more disorientated than usual.

Many conditions, such as infections, can cause disorientation and distress that often diminish once the condition has been treated and the person re-settled into a familiar home environment. When disorientation is severe it is known as **delirium**. Delirium is a common condition that usually affects

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patients for a short period of time. Symptoms generally disappear within six days, although this could continue for up to six months.

Delirium can cause:

- Confusion
- Restless behaviour
- Physical change e.g. difficulty walking, swallowing or speaking
- Sleepiness
- Personality change

Patients with delirium may not recognise even their closest family. They may become paranoid, developing an extreme and irrational fear or distrust of others. It is common for patients with delirium to have hallucinations.

**These symptoms of delirium are also associated with dementia; a patient with dementia may already be experiencing these symptoms and these may worsen with delirium.**

Although the condition can affect anyone, certain groups are at greater risk of developing delirium. These include patients:

- who are older - the risk increases with age
- with dementia
- who are physically frail
- who are admitted with dehydration or an infection
- with sight or hearing problems
- who are taking lots of different medications
- who consume excessive alcohol or take illegal drugs
- who are severely ill
- with neurological problems such as a stroke, Parkinson's disease or a head injury
- who have undergone surgery
- who are nearing the end of their life

Problems with sight and hearing can increase disorientation and feelings of isolation. Problems with teeth, gums or dentures can result in discomfort, stress and insufficient food and fluid intake.

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It is, therefore, essential that glasses, hearing aids, dentures etc are all in working order and accompany the patient to help reduce these issues.

### Top tips for carers

- Let staff know that the person you care for has dementia.
  - Ensure staff enter on the patient's record that you are the carer, to ensure you are kept informed of discharge planning, treatment etc.
  - 'This is Me' is a document that helps staff to know the person better e.g. how they communicate their needs. If you don't have a copy of this, please ask a member of staff who will provide you with one for future use.
  - If the person you care for no longer has capacity to make decisions for themselves, and has been assessed as such, please ask that you be included in all decisions regarding the person's care or provide the contact details of the most appropriate person to be contacted. Whoever holds the Enduring or Lasting Power of Attorney should provide staff with a copy.
  - If you have a memory box please bring this in to hospital, to help staff get to know the person.
  - Feel free to bring familiar objects that will help the patient settle, reduce their anxiety and also provide a talking point for staff and visitors.
  - We encourage patients to have their own clothes, rather than wearing hospital gowns; this helps maintain routines which can assist the patient with recognising the time of day.
  - Use a message pad or notebook to let the person know where you are and when you will be back.
  - If the person has difficulty eating or drinking, please make staff aware; the Trust uses the 'red tray' system to ensure that patients who need it get help at mealtimes. Staff also
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welcome any tips or assistance you can provide for ensuring the patient receives satisfactory nutrition while in hospital.

- If a person needs to walk around a lot or is prone to becoming restless, please tell the staff and pass on any tips you might have for how we can assist with this.
- The staff will discuss with you what will happen when it is getting near the time for discharge, so that you are prepared and know what support is available.

You may want to make an appointment to see a hospital social worker, who can advise on a range of matters, such as:

- Problems getting to and from the hospital
- Benefits and Continuing Health Care (CHC) for ongoing support at home or in residential or nursing care
- Difficulties experienced by carers, friends or family, such as illness, disability, stress or other commitments that may affect their ability to visit or continue to care for the person

Your local Carers' Organisation can be really helpful. They can offer information, advice and emotional and practical assistance to support you in your caring role. Other services are also offered, including a free Kent Carers' Emergency Card.

### **Documentation and the Care Passport or 'This is Me'**

The Alzheimer's Society has produced a leaflet called '**This is Me**' which supports person-centred care and can be used to record personal and life history information. When completed, it provides a snapshot of the person with dementia, giving information about them as an individual, such as needs, preferences, likes, dislikes and interests. You can obtain a copy from the Alzheimer's Society web site (<http://alzheimers.org.uk>) or ask a member of staff for a copy. The information you can record should include:

- The name by which the person wishes to be known.
  - The carer's name (person who supports/looks after them).
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- Brief details of their normal routine, including whether or not they need reminders or support with washing, dressing, going to the toilet, eating, drinking or taking medication.
  - Information about foods they particularly like or dislike, or any difficulties they have when eating.
  - Illness or pain that may bother them.

### **How long will the stay in hospital be?**

The consultant or doctor in charge will decide on a discharge date. Hospitals are the right place to be when specific medical or surgical treatment is required, but once treatment is complete it is important that discharge is not delayed, especially for someone with dementia, to help minimise disruption and confusion and return them to familiar surroundings as soon as possible.

As soon as someone is admitted to hospital a treatment plan is developed which takes their needs for discharge into account, e.g. they may have ongoing health and social care needs that require further support after their care in hospital.

The Trust offers a range of emergency and acute services and works closely in partnership with several NHS, social care and private providers. As the person's condition improves during their stay they may be moved to the care of one of our partners in a less acute environment or sent home with organised support from community services.

If treatment or surgery is planned the patient may be given an expected length of stay before they are admitted. However, all patients will be given an expected date for discharge within 48 hours of admission. This may change during their hospital stay and staff will keep you informed.

Discharges can take place on any day of the week including weekends and bank holidays, and where possible we aim to discharge patients by 10.00am.

For further information regarding discharge from hospital please ask staff for a copy of the Trust's Discharge Information leaflet.

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## Useful resources

### **Alzheimer's Society**

Maidstone and Medway

West Kent

East Sussex

 01622 747181

 01892 835498

 01303 260674

### **Kent Dementia 24 Hour Helpline**

 0800 500 3014

### **Admiral Nurse**

 01622 726899

### **Crossroads Care West Kent**

 01622 817114

### **Involve Kent**

[www.involvekent.org.uk](http://www.involvekent.org.uk)

 01622 677337

### **Sussex Support Service**

[www.sussexsupportservice.com](http://www.sussexsupportservice.com)

 01825 860176

## **Websites**

[www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

Useful website with information and factsheets.

[www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)

Carers Trust: for advice and information on carers support outside Kent.

[www.dementiaroadmap.info/westkent](http://www.dementiaroadmap.info/westkent)

Provides high quality information about the dementia journey, alongside local information about services, support groups and care pathways.

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**Please use this space to write any notes or questions you may have.**

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**MTW NHS Trust is committed to making its patient information accessible in a range of languages and formats. If you need this leaflet in another language or format please ask one of your clinical care team or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We will do our best to arrange this.**

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

**Telephone:** ☎ 01622 224960 or ☎ 01892 632953

**Email:** [mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net](mailto:mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net)

**or visit their office** at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: [www.mtw.nhs.uk](http://www.mtw.nhs.uk) or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

Issue date: March 2019

Database reference: RWF-OPLF-PES116

Review date: March 2022

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The master copy is held on Q-Pulse Document Management System

This copy – REV 3.0

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