

PRESS RELEASE

A&E Department Trial Scheme Launched Today

One in eight of patients attending Russells Hall Emergency Department could be seen by their GP or pharmacy after research found that many attendees should not be there.

From February, patients who attend A&E when they don't need to will be assessed and then redirected back to another health professional such as their GP or pharmacist, or be given advice about how to look after themselves.

We are trialling this system to help us ensure that the emergency department is always available for those with a severe or life threatening problem.

The changes, which are being trialled for 2 months, following research of attendance at Russells Hall Hospital A&E which found that up to 12% of patients did not need hospital treatment.

Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust Emergency Department Consultant, Dr Rajan Paw, explained: "Patients may think that hospital is the best place for them, but that is not always the case. Urgent Care services need to be reserved for urgent illnesses and injuries that cannot be treated elsewhere. For many conditions the best place for you to get treatment is your GP who is the expert at treating these problems.

"Patients who attend with minor illnesses prevent doctors and nurses from seeing those patients most in need. In the emergency department we are the experts at dealing with heart attacks, broken bones and other life threatening conditions. We will make sure patients have safe, appropriate care in the right place, but that won't always be in the accident and emergency department."

Dudley GP, Dr Steve Mann said: "Some patients visit the Accident & Emergency Department repeatedly with the same symptoms, which do not need hospital treatment; these patients could have received assessment and reassurance from their GP or an alternative service in the borough.

"Patients tell us they go to A&E, even when they know they shouldn't, because they think they might not be able to get a GP appointment, they want a second opinion, or they want a prescription instead of buying medicine. These are not valid reasons

and they are wasting their time sitting in a hospital waiting room when they could be treated more quickly and conveniently elsewhere.”

Unprecedented demand for urgent care services over recent years has placed a great strain on hospital resources.

Under the pilot scheme, senior nurses will assess patients on arrival at the Accident & Emergency Department to determine whether they need immediate treatment in urgent care.

If not, at certain times (between 7.30am – 11.30am) patients will be redirected to the most appropriate health professional – this could be a GP or pharmacist,– or given advice about how to look after themselves. The accident and emergency team will make sure they have an appointment where necessary before they leave.

The pilot scheme is being jointly launched by Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Ends

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