

Media Release

Board approves temporary overnight suspension of A&E services at PRH

27 September 2018

The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust today agreed to temporarily suspend overnight A&E services at the Princess Royal Hospital (PRH) in Telford to ensure services are safe for patients.

- A closure from 8pm until 8am and is expected to happen in November.
- Until then the services will continue 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week.
- Once the plan for safely managing the overnight suspension has been agreed there will be a programme of full communications aimed at the public, staff and other bodies.
- The temporary overnight suspension is likely to last for six months and any re-opening would be dependent on the ability to provide safe services and the Board of SaTH will be keeping this under review,

Simon Wright, Chief Executive, said: "This is the hardest decision that we have ever had to make, but it is the right one to safeguard our patients in the current circumstances.

"I want to reassure everyone that we remain committed to providing the safest, kindest quality of care. We also remain committed in our efforts to recruit to our emergency departments, regardless of today's decision."

The decision means:

- PRH A&E department will be closed to ambulance admissions at 8pm. Ambulances will be diverted to neighbouring Trusts.
- The Urgent Care Centre will accept patients until 8pm
- PRH will continue to accept GP referred admissions in those specialities managed at PRH between 8am and 8pm, seven-days-a-week
- Stroke patients arriving by ambulance will be admitted via a direct pathway to the appropriate clinical ward.

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The Royal College of Medicine (RCEM) recommends that SaTH's two A&E Departments should have between them:

- 20 Emergency Medicine Consultants – when they have just 10 (four permanent and six locums)
- 32 middle grade doctors – when they have just 11
- And nurse staffing levels are a concern with the level of temporary and permanent vacancies meaning a heavy reliance on agency nurses or shifts left unfilled.

Dr Kevin Eardley, Care Group Medical Director for Unscheduled Care, said: “This is not where we want to be but we have been very clear for some time now about the fragility of the EDs at RSH and PRH, and that we cannot continue to operate both sites overnight in the long-term with staffing levels as they are.

“We don’t have enough doctors and nurses to safely staff both of our A&Es 24-hours-a day, seven-days-a-week and, as a result, we are relying on the goodwill of our medical and nursing staff to keep those services running. This has put them under enormous pressure, and is no longer sustainable.

“I want to reassure everyone that our business continuity plans have been under constant review, and robustly tested, to ensure that there will be as little impact on patients as possible.

“We have, and continue to, work closely with our health partners including our commissioners, ambulance services and neighbouring Trusts, on this.”

Notes for Editors:

- The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust is the main provider of acute hospital care for almost 500,000 people from Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and mid Wales. Patients come to us from Telford, Shrewsbury, Ludlow, Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Whitchurch, Newtown and Welshpool in Powys.
- The Trust continues to work with its partners in health and social care in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and mid Wales to develop patient-focused services that meet the needs of our communities.
- There is a shortage of emergency care doctors in the UK. The Royal College of Emergency Medicine believes the NHS in England needs 2,200 more A&E consultants by 2022.

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