

## COVID-19 pressure beds: relieving the demand on acute beds by transferring into hospice care.



### Background

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, health and care systems were under immense pressure. Ashgate made the decision to assist the local NHS Trust and admit palliative patients who had tested positive for COVID-19 into six pressure beds on our Inpatient Unit. Building on the partnership between the hospice and the Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, the beds were accessed by the Trust through a new patient pathway of admission between October 2020 and March 2021.



### Conclusion

Our findings demonstrate that working in partnership with the wider health and care system improves patient access to hospice care. The invaluable patient and family experience provides strong evidence for the continuation of the additional six beds.

Despite the implemented patient criteria, all patients transferred still required medical input due to their complex needs.

We can restart the pathway if a third wave occurs, and the hospice is further exploring how we can continue to support our local trust with the option of flexible winter pressure beds.



### Aim

To achieve a timely, safe and appropriate transfer of COVID positive criteria led patients from secondary care to hospice care.



### Methods

- A new admission transfer criteria was introduced – patients with non-complex palliative care needs who were COVID positive.
- A Service Level Agreement was established with the Trust to enable a consistent and collaborative approach.
- The ward sisters held daily morning meetings to discuss identified admissions. Taking into consideration current patient acuity, staffing and vacant beds.
- A designated wing was established to care for COVID positive patients to prevent transmission of infection and we talked about what we were doing to our supporters and community, including through the media which led to an increase in donations.



### Results

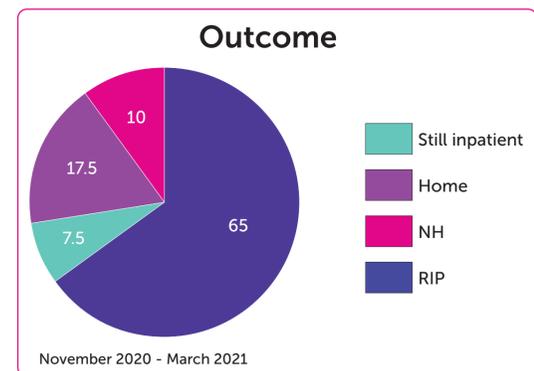
In total 40 patients have been transferred to the hospice for symptom control, fast track onto further care or as the patient's preferred place of care for end of life.

The original proposal calculated that 90 patients would be transferred during the agreed time scale equalling 720 saved bed days available for Urgent Care pathways. In the event the transfer to hospice care resulted in 369 saved bed days. This was less than had originally been anticipated due to lack of bed availability, combined with infection prevention and control and staffing constraints preventing the transfer of patients otherwise deemed appropriate.

The transfer of Acute patients to Ashgate's care resulted in 369 saved bed days.

Families were allowed precious time during the last days of life for 65% of patients in a calm and caring environment maintaining privacy and dignity for patients in their last days.

We were able to facilitate safe discharges home when patients recovered from the virus.



### Feedback

Our acute hospital has received many comments from patients and families expressing their gratitude for the opportunity to spend quality time with their loved ones in their last week's/days of life – due to COVID-19 restrictions the level of visiting permitted at the hospice exceeded CRH visiting depending on the patient's location. Patients were delighted to have the option of transferring to the hospice with one memorable patient sending her grateful thanks for being allowed her dog to come and visit her.

Below is our feedback from transferred patients:

- How would you rate your care overall?  
100% patients & relatives scored this at excellent (82%) or very good (18%)
- How likely are you to recommend the service to friends and family?  
100% scored this as extremely likely (88%) or likely (12%)
- Were you treated with dignity & respect? 100% said Yes always
- Did you have enough privacy when discussing your condition/treatment? 100% said "Yes always"
- Did your relative have confidence in the Drs/nurses treating them?  
100% said "Yes always"
- When you/your relative had important questions to ask the Drs/nurses did you get answers you could understand? 100% said es always
- 100% of relatives said they felt supported.

Comments from relatives/patients taken from thank you cards, letters or emails:

"I could not have wished for my Mum to be cared for in her last days anywhere other than at Ashgate Hospice. Everyone was very kind and thoughtful towards Mum, nothing too much trouble. My Mum was in different hospitals for three weeks before she came to Ashgate, no one was allowed to visit, it was heart breaking. I will be eternally grateful that at last I was able to see Mum and spend the last hours with her. It meant the world to me and my family. Thank you".

"While I am devastated at the loss of my Mum, I can take comfort in knowing that in her final days & hours she received the most amazing, sensitive and loving care by all whom attended to her need. My Mum passed peacefully for which I am eternally grateful to you all for. Love and thank you all".

"To doctors, nursing team and all staff. I wish to thank you on behalf of myself & family for the kindness and compassion shown to my husband during the time he was a patient up to his death, nothing was too much trouble. I was treated with respect & care. From entering the hospice, I felt the peace of the place. Thank you".

"Thank you so much for the care you provided for my dad and the kindness you showed to myself and my auntie. You showed compassion and gave him what dignity he had left. Thank you for trying to make him as comfortable as you could on his final day. Your staff made the hardest day of my life a little bit easier."