

## **PRESS RELEASE**

29 November 2017

### **Patients have a responsibility to be ‘fit, willing and able’**

Wiltshire patients are being encouraged to be ‘fit, willing and able’ this winter to ensure planned outpatient clinics and operations run as smoothly as possible over the traditionally pressured winter period.

Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is working with GPs and hospital clinicians across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire to help guide patients through their treatment pathways and in turn reduce the number of instances where patients do not turn up for their appointments, or decline required appointments, or dates for planned operations.

The CCG is also concerned about the increasing number of patients who are referred for cancer investigations who are declining, or choosing to postpone their appointments and assessments.

Dr Christine Blanshard, Medical Director for Salisbury Hospital explains: “We are asking patients to help us by helping themselves and ensuring they are fit, willing and able this winter, so that we can continue to deliver a high quality service.

“When patients are not at their optimum health, do not attend their appointments, or decline the dates that we offer it wastes the time of our ever-stretched doctors and nurses. It’s important that our patients who are referred understand the requirements of them.

“During 2016/17, 23,493 outpatient appointments were missed across Salisbury Foundation Trust, Royal United Hospital in Bath and Great Western Hospital in Swindon. Between April – June 2017, 5,835 patients failed to turn up to, or declined appointments and planned surgery dates, suggesting a similar trend to the previous year.”

Dr Andy Hall from The Orchard Partnership in Fovant explains: “With people living longer and with more complex conditions such as cancer, patient referrals for specialist health care are at an all-time high.

“When referred patients do not to turn up to their appointments, or decide to postpone their outpatient appointment, or surgery it can have a detrimental effect on their current and future health - and that is our primary concern.

“We recently clinically reviewed the number of patients who had been referred to hospital for potential cancer investigations who had chosen to delay their appointment. We were very worried by the high numbers and want to ensure patients understand the importance of attending.”

Wiltshire CCG has worked with clinicians to develop the ‘fit, willing and able’ campaign to help patients understand the importance of attending their appointments, particularly for patients who are referred with symptoms that could indicate cancer.

The campaign focuses on ensuring patients are:

**Fit** – aware of their planned treatment and are in their best health to get the maximum benefit from it. This can include maintaining a healthy weight and stopping smoking.

**Willing** – clear about what their treatment entails and are willing to sign up to it at the outset

**Able** – committed to attending future appointments and understand that this may require flexibility on their part

Dr Richard Sandford-Hill, Clinical Chair for Wiltshire CCG, explains: “As we enter the winter period, which is notoriously challenging for the NHS nationwide, we want to help patients to have the best experience with their specialist care; at the same time as ensuring we are using our resources as efficiently as possible.

“Our fit, willing and able campaign aims to ensure referred patients can and do attend their planned appointments. By helping patients to be fit for treatment, clarifying their willingness to have surgery early in the process and by being able to attend their appointments we can deliver a smooth service and help to minimise the impact of winter pressures.”

Increased emergency admittances to hospital over the winter have a knock-on effect to those patients who have been referred and have pre-planned appointments.

For more information, please visit [www.wiltshireccg.nhs.uk](http://www.wiltshireccg.nhs.uk)

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#### Notes for Editors:

- Image included
- NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is the commissioner of health care services for the population of Wiltshire. The CCG is led by local GPs who have first-hand experience of what their patients need.
- The CCG consists of 49 GP member practices and works closely with local partners including Wiltshire Council, local NHS providers, patients and the public to manage existing NHS services and implement new services to ensure that high quality health and social care is delivered to the population as close to their home as possible.

Further information can be found on the website [www.wiltshireccg.nhs.uk](http://www.wiltshireccg.nhs.uk)

**Further information:**

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