



# Leaving hospital during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic



## What you should know about leaving hospital

We have changed the way we work during the coronavirus pandemic. Here is what you should know about being discharged from hospital and what you can expect after leaving hospital.

### Helping you get better at home

Hospital is the best place to be if you are very ill or need surgery, but evidence suggests the best place to recover is at home. Staying in hospital too long can result in poorer health and longer recovery times. So as soon as you are well enough, we will discharge you to the best possible place to support your recovery – in most cases, this will be your home.

There may be reasons why you would not be able to be discharged directly home from hospital. These may include changes in your home environment, or your needs may have changed in such a way that they cannot be managed at home.

### What to expect

Before leaving hospital, we will discuss your needs and discharge arrangements with you, and your family or carer if you would like them to be involved.

We want to make sure you are discharged as soon as you are ready, and it is safe to do so. To help you get home more quickly, we will no longer carry out comprehensive assessments in hospital. Instead, our Discharge to Assess team will support your recovery after your discharge and continue your assessments out of hospital.

This means you can get better in the comfort of your own home with the support of our team of social workers, therapists, and care staff. They will help you get back to your normal life and assess your longer-term needs in the right place.

**It is our priority to ensure that you are discharged safely from hospital and to the most appropriate available place.**

Your hospital team will decide your discharge destination based on your individual situation and your needs for care and support. There are three places you may be discharged to (these are also known as pathways):



### Are there costs involved?

This service is free of charge.

If you need ongoing support following your initial recovery period, you may need to contribute financially.

### How can I find out more?

You can talk to ward staff to find out more about what options are available to you – in fact, we will start talking to you about your arrangements for discharge as soon as possible.

## Getting ready to leave hospital to go home

When you no longer need care in a hospital setting, we will work with you to plan your discharge so you can return home. You will only be discharged home when your hospital team has agreed you can go home. Planning your discharge with you, your family or carer helps us to make sure you leave hospital in a safe and timely manner. There are few things you can do to prepare:

- ▲ Speak to your ward staff about when you are likely to go home and what needs to happen to get you there
- ▲ Consider what support you might want when you get home and how friends and family may be able to help
- ▲ Think about your goals for your recovery at home
- ▲ Organise your transport home on your discharge day and who will meet you when you get home
- ▲ Make sure you have outdoor clothes and your house keys ready for when you go home
- ▲ Involve your family or carer in any conversations.



## What will happen when I return home?

If you are returning home with support, a care worker will typically meet you at home on the day of your discharge. They will undertake their own assessment of your needs and consider any risks to make sure you can safely recover at home.

A social worker or therapist from the Discharge to Assess team will carry out a full assessment within 48 hours of your discharge and discuss with you what support you will need to help you recover and how long you will need this support for.

If you need help to improve your independence and wellbeing after leaving hospital, they will also work with you to set your step by step goals. This is known as reablement support.

Sometimes it helps to have someone else who can help you express your views and represent your interests. You might want to ask a family member or carer to join you for your assessment. If you don't have someone to support you in this way, we can arrange for an independent advocate to ensure that you are involved in all decisions about your care and support.

How long you will receive support, will depends on your needs. Your needs will be reviewed regularly, and the Discharge to Assess team will work with you and your family member or carer to plan for the future, including arranging longer-term care and support.



## What is reablement?

Reablement aims to work with you to look at what you need to get better and to regain your independence and strength to live safely at home.

If you receive reablement when you return home, the Discharge to Assess team will arrange therapy and support workers to help you recover at home. The kind of support you could be offered includes:

- ▲ Practical support to help you regain your skills and confidence in doing things for yourself.
- ▲ A goal-focussed plan for your care and recovery.
- ▲ Advice and equipment to help you at home.
- ▲ Advice and guidance on how you can take care of yourself.
- ▲ Support and advice to access services in the local community, such as shopping and housekeeping.

As you become more independent, the support you receive will be adjusted over time. Usually, this means that your support will reduce gradually until you are back to being as independent as possible.

## What happens if I'm not well enough to return home?

Sometimes you can be ready to leave hospital but not well enough to return home. If you are not able to return home from hospital, we will discuss all the options with you and your family or carer. This could include getting better somewhere else – such as in another bed in the community, where staff will support your recovery and rehabilitation or a care home.

If you are moving to a care home, you may not have a choice of which care home you will be discharged initially. This is a temporary measure during the coronavirus pandemic and the placement can be revised once restrictions related to coronavirus are lifted.

You will be assessed in the rehabilitation or interim bed or care home by health and social care professionals with the aim for you to return home when this is possible.

## Will I have to pay if I need support to leave hospital?

During the coronavirus pandemic, any new or increased care and support services arranged as part of your discharge from hospital will be funded by the NHS for a period of time to support your recovery – this is up to a maximum of six weeks or until an assessment has taken place out of hospital.

However, should you require ongoing care and support following your recovery, your Local Authority (council) will carry out a financial assessment for any contribution you need to make towards that care.

Most people have to pay something towards the cost of their long-term care and support. What you pay will depend on your individual circumstances including your income and savings, and the kind of support you need, who provides it and how often you need help. Again, you may want to ask a family member or carer to join you for your financial assessment. If you don't have someone to support you in this way, please speak to your social worker or therapist from the community team for help.

If you have any queries or would like more specific advice about paying for care and support and the financial assessment process, the Financial Assessments Team can help. You will find the contact details at the back of this leaflet.

## What will happen on discharge day?

We will always aim to get you home during daytime hours on your day of discharge rather than keep you in hospital for longer than necessary.

Wherever possible you should organise your own transport to get home. We recommend that you discuss this with the ward staff to ensure family, friends or a taxi collect you at an appropriate time. You will be able to leave the hospital as soon as you have received any equipment and medication you need, and all the paperwork required for a safe discharge. We aim to have these prepared the day before your planned discharge date to avoid any delay.

Hospital transport is not available to all patients and the ward staff will only consider arranging this for patients who are eligible. If you require hospital transport, this will be pre-booked for you. However, waiting times can be lengthy, which can be particularly exhausting for patients.

## Keeping safe

Everyone should be able to live freely without fear, to make the choices they wish and to be treated with respect. If you think you or someone you know is at risk, it is important to get help. People can often feel too scared and anxious to come forward, but help is available.

You can report your concerns by contacting your Local Authority (council). You can find their details at the back of this leaflet. They can offer advice and support to victims of abuse and provide information on any future action they may wish to take against their abusers. They will also support the victim if he/she not able to make decisions on his/her own and put measures in place to protect them.

If someone is in immediate danger, always make sure they are safe first. If emergency help is needed, dial 999.

## Looking after someone

If you look after someone who needs support because of an illness or disability and cannot manage without help, you could be considered a Carer. Many people are or have been a carer at some point in their lives even though they may have other responsibilities or need support themselves.

Being a carer can be emotionally and physically challenging. It is important that you look after yourself to make sure you stay healthy and well. There are a range of services and support available for carers. The Carers Centre can provide advice and information about the options available. You will find the contact details at the back of this leaflet.

If you would like to talk to someone about how caring responsibilities affect your life and find out what additional support, you are entitled to ask your Local Authority (council) for a carer's assessment.

## Where can I get more information and advice?

### Discharge to Assess Hub

The Discharge to Assess team consist of health and social care staff working together to support hospital discharge. The Single Point of Access for referrals is provided by Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH).

For Merton, please contact:

**Tel:** **0333 004 7555** (lines are manned Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm and Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays from 8am to 5pm)

**Email:** [clcht.mertonspa@nhs.net](mailto:clcht.mertonspa@nhs.net)

For Wandsworth, please contact:

**Tel:** **0333 300 2350** (lines are manned Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm and Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays from 8am to 5pm)

**Email:** [clcht.wandsworthspa@nhs.net](mailto:clcht.wandsworthspa@nhs.net)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### **I Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453

**Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### **I NHS Choices**

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **I NHS 111**

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast, but it is not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### **I Wandsworth Council Adult Social Care**

Wandsworth Adult Social Care can provide information, support and guidance to adults with care and support needs, and those who look after them including safeguarding concerns.

**Tel:** 020 8871 7707

**Minicom:** 020 8871 8485

**Email:** [accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/adultsocialcare](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/adultsocialcare)

### **I Wandsworth Council Financial Assessments Team**

If you have any queries or would like more specific advice about paying for care and support and the financial assessment process, the Financial Assessments Team can help:

**Phone:** 020 8871 6218

**Email:** [financeAT@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:financeAT@wandsworth.gov.uk)

### **I Merton Council Adult Social Care**

Merton Adult Social Care can provide information, support and guidance to adults with care and support needs, who need help following discharge from hospital.

**Tel:** 020 8274 5302/5303/5312

**Email:** [h2hnotifications@merton.gov.uk](mailto:h2hnotifications@merton.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.merton.gov.uk/social-care/adult-social-care](http://www.merton.gov.uk/social-care/adult-social-care)

### **I Merton Council Financial Assessments Team**

If you have any queries or would like more specific advice about paying for care and support and the financial assessment process, the Financial Assessments Team can help:

**Phone:** 020 8545 4047/4036

**Email:** [financial.assessment@merton.gov.uk](mailto:financial.assessment@merton.gov.uk)

### **I Age UK Merton**

Age UK Merton is an independent local charity which offers practical support, advice and information to older people and their carers. They can provide help with day-to-day activities, such as shopping and other everyday tasks after returning home from hospital.

**Tel:** 020 8648 5792

**Email:** [info@ageukmerton.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukmerton.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.ageuk.org.uk/merton](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/merton)

### **I Age UK Wandsworth**

Age UK Wandsworth is an independent local charity which offers practical support, advice and information to older people and their carers. They can provide help with day-to-day activities, such as shopping, housekeeping and other practical support for up to six weeks after returning home from hospital.

**Tel:** 020 8877 8940

**Email:** [info@ageukwandsworth.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukwandsworth.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.ageuk.org.uk/wandsworth](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/wandsworth)

### **I Carers Support Merton**

Carers Support Merton is an independent charity formed in 1991 by a group of local carers. We have been through a number of changes since then. We exist to support unpaid carers from the age of 5 in Merton to stay well and live a fulfilling life.

**Tel:** 020 8646 7515

**Email:** [info@csmerton.org](mailto:info@csmerton.org)

**Website:** [www.csmerton.org](http://www.csmerton.org)

## **I Wandsworth Carers' Centre**

Wandsworth Carers' Centre is a registered charity which supports Carers in their caring role. They offer free and confidential counselling service and run a range of events which include social events, peer-support groups, training and workshops.

**Tel:** 020 8877 1200

**Email:** [info@wandsworthcarers.org.uk](mailto:info@wandsworthcarers.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.carerswandsworth.org.uk](http://www.carerswandsworth.org.uk)

