



# Delivering patient and population benefits

## Patient Flow

### Background

Meeting daily demand for admissions is a challenge faced by all NHS organisations with an inpatient bed base. Hospital trusts experience problems with patients backing up for admission when the hospital is 'full' and sick patients need to be admitted. Some of the major reasons why this happens are related to the 'flow' of patients through the hospital.

For example:

1. Most discharges happen in the afternoon or early evening, whilst admissions happen throughout the day, resulting in patients waiting until the later part of the day to get a bed.
2. There is a significant proportion of patients who do not need to be in a bed. Estimates suggest that this is about 30%.

### Why is this work important?

Patient flow is a priority for many hospitals. Rapid access to a hospital bed is important for the safety of sick patients. It is also true that staying longer than necessary in hospital is not good for patients who may risk losing confidence or their independence. In addition, hospitals that do not have effective patient flow may also have difficulty in meeting the national four-hour standard for patients waiting in A&E.

## Our contribution

We have worked with patient flow experts Operasi to implement operational management tools 'Visual Hospital' and 'Plan for every patient' in Scarborough Hospital. Building on the learning and our experience of Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust, who demonstrated a 30% reduction in length of stay on medical wards, we have systematically introduced the same tools into Scarborough Hospital.

Through our Improvement Academy we have provided:

- Experienced project management to guide and facilitate Scarborough Hospital in their learning and in the implementation of patient flow tools.
- The analytical skills to evaluate both the results and the learning from this project so that other hospitals can take steps to address their patient flow issues.

Mapping a patient's inpatient journey shows that the majority of time is spent waiting. This project demonstrates that when we design processes to provide what patients need when they need it, they're satisfied, and length of stay reduces, making patient flow much easier for us to manage.

Whilst this is still work in progress, early length of stay results at Scarborough are very encouraging and show a result in the order of 20% reduced length of stay.

“... unlike previous years, we have been able to review every single patient, every two hours and target resources appropriately to effect an increased number of discharges.”

Mandy McGale, Director of Operations, Scarborough Hospital

## What's next?

The lessons from initial implementation sites will be shared through facilitated and targeted regional Roundtable and Masterclass events, which will be opened up to interested trusts in the region. Following on from this, we will support wider and sustainable spread through a rigorous and supported Train the Trainer approach. The exciting synergy with the Patient Safety Collaborative work programme will be fully exploited to support the implementation and embedding of this approach, to deliver safer and more efficient care, and to enhance the value of this work programme for member organisations.

