



Dear

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus crisis, emergency changes have been made to how the NHS and Social care work with people who require discharge from hospital. The NHS estimates it will need 15,000 beds to deal with the crisis, and the government has recently published new statutory requirementsⁱ to ensure these beds are available for those who need them most. Under the new requirements patients will be transferred from wards within 1 hour of being deemed clinically safe, and they are to be discharged from hospital within 2 hours of this decision.

The health and well-being of our residents and communities is our top priority, and our health and Social Care teams are working together to ensure we are meeting our new statutory obligations and keeping patients safe. As there is a very short time between transfer and discharge under the new requirements, it's unlikely that we'll be able to offer patient or family choice in terms of discharge in the cases where it has been decided the patient needs a care home placement.

However, to make the process easier for individuals who fund their own care, the initial cost of these placements will be covered by the NHS, meaning those people will be subject to the same process as those who receive publicly funded care. This will be for a limited time until the Coronavirus emergency is over.

Therefore, we are now working to discharge people as quickly as possible to care homes where there are vacancies. We will not place people in homes where we have ceased placing prior to this emergency due to safety concerns.

I hope that is clear. If you have any questions, please contact the NHS or Social care member of staff who is working with you.

I sincerely thank you for your understanding in this matter and I hope you and your family keep well during this difficult time.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Stephens
Somerset County Council

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