

# Information for patients and carers

## Virtual Ward

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

## What is a Virtual Ward?

Virtual wards (also known as hospital at home) are a safe and efficient alternative to NHS bedded care. Using technology and face-to-face care, patients who would otherwise need to be admitted or continue their stay in hospital are offered the choice of receiving the treatment they need in their own homes. The Virtual Ward comprises all the patients, staff, and provisions to do this.

Some patients or their carers may feel nervous about using technology. Adjustments can be made to support them, and we will also explain and demonstrate how to use any monitoring equipment that may be needed.

## How am I looked after on the Virtual Ward?

Virtual Ward patients are cared for in their own home. This can be done using monitoring equipment, telephone follow ups or a face-to-face review.

Patients on the Virtual Ward are still classed as a hospital inpatient. This means they remain under the care of a consultant in hospital.

Similar to a normal hospital ward, the Virtual Ward has a multidisciplinary team (MDT) who will be involved in patient care including consultants, advanced clinical practitioners, nurses, health care assistants and occupational therapist. We have a daily MDT meeting to discuss each patient and their plan of care.

Further investigations such as blood test and X-rays and other scans may be needed. This will be decided by a consultant, patients will be informed by the Virtual Ward team of the appropriate arrangements.

## What monitoring equipment will I need?

Monitoring equipment used can include a blood pressure monitor, pulse oximeter to monitor heart rate and oxygen saturation and a thermometer. Not every patient requires monitoring equipment. This will be discussed with you when you are seen by the Virtual Ward team.

Monitoring equipment will be loaned out to you for the duration of your stay on the Virtual Ward. Once you have been discharged, you can drop off the equipment at the discharge lounge in Royal Preston Hospital. If you are unable to return the equipment, we can arrange collection at home.

## What happens after discharge from the Virtual Ward?

Your ongoing care will be handed back to your GP, community provider or existing specialist team. You will receive a copy of your discharge letter through the post and an electronic copy will be sent your GP.

## Virtual Ward opening times

Weekdays Monday -Friday: 08:00 – 18:00

Weekends and Bank Holidays: 08:00 – 16:00

## Virtual Ward contact numbers

Virtual Ward contact number: **07355 472095**

Out of Hours contact number: **01257 247094**

## What should I do if I feel unwell?

If your symptoms worsen quickly, please use the information below to help:

### **Call 999 or go to the Emergency Department immediately if:**

- Are suddenly so breathless you cannot talk
- Have severe chest pain
- Cough up blood
- Feel cold, clammy or have mottled skin
- Become confused, feeling drowsy or become agitated
- Are not passing urine or passing much less than usual
- Develop a new rash that looks like small bruises and does not fade when you roll a glass over it

### **Call the Virtual Ward or the Out of Hours or NHS 111 if you:**

- Are feeling more unwell
- Have reduced mobility or too weak to get out of bed
- Are not able to eat or drink
- Have new or worsening swelling to lower limbs
- Have new symptom that you are concerned about

### **Good Signs that you are improving:**

- You are gradually starting to feel better
- You are starting to eat and drink more normally
- You are getting back to your normal level of activity

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

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

[www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

**Follow us on social media @lancshospitals**

**Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.**

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets)

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.  
This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

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