Improvements to facilities for young people, access to education, and information for children and families highlighted as key recommendations in latest Children in Hospital Survey

Wednesday 30 October, 2019

The latest Children in Hospital Survey 2018-19 which takes an in depth look at the provision of parental visiting, family facilities and ward procedures in Scottish hospitals that admit children and young people has been released by Children's Health Scotland. The survey report was launched at a Scottish Parliamentary Reception, sponsored by Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, on Wednesday 30 October 2019 and improvements in the provision of information, education and food are among the recommendations outlined in the key findings.

Commenting on the launch of the survey report Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP said:

"Since 1985, Children's Health Scotland has carried out periodic surveys of Scottish NHS hospitals admitting children and young people. This latest survey highlights the good practice and progress that has been made in the provision of children's services in hospitals, whilst also identifying areas where improvements need to be made. It is an important piece of research and one which I hope will help to shape the future of services for children and young people in our hospitals."

Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Children and Young People added:

"Being in hospital is a difficult time for anyone let alone children and young people and I am pleased that the findings in this survey show there is high quality support for them while they receive treatment from the NHS.

"We will continue to build on the good work and sustain improvement so that children, young people and their families receive the best possible care."

Key recommendations outlined in the survey in relation to children and young people include:

- *All wards to offer overnight accommodation and unrestricted visiting, including a sitting room close to the ward with self-catering facilities and subsidised meals in the hospital cafe/staff cafeteria.*
- *All wards to provide a family support/liaison worker or social worker in addition to translation services for spoken and written communications.*
- *Ward staff to provide information that is understood by patients and carers (not just made available) both for elective and emergency admissions.*
- *Young people between 16 and 18 should be offered the choice of admission to a children's or an adult ward.*
- *Surgery to be provided on dedicated lists with particular anaesthetists allocated to children's surgery.*
- *Children under the age of 16 should not be admitted to adult wards*
- *A named Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) professional and written procedures for managing violent or aggressive behaviours to be always made available for those admitted with mental health conditions to paediatric wards.*
- *The provision of healthy, attractive and nutritional meals.*
- *The provision of education within five days of admission, or immediately if it is known that the stay will be longer.*
- *A consistent Child Health Commissioner role across all health boards.*

The survey results have been benchmarked against the ten articles of the European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH) Charter, key standards for paediatric care. EACH is an international umbrella organisation open to European non-governmental, non-profit national associations involved in the welfare of children in hospital and other healthcare services.

The EACH Charter echoes many of the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), soon to be incorporated into Scots Law.

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Speaking about the research Professor Richard Olver, Chair of Children's Health Scotland said:

"Since our last survey in 2012-13, it is pleasing to note that progress has been achieved in the provision of hospital services for children and young people such as open visiting and the provision of overnight and on-ward facilities for parents/carers.

"However, there are still areas for improvement particularly with reference to the standards set out in the EACH Charter. It is a fact that all children have an explicit right to achieve their developmental potential and to sustain the highest possible standard of health, with a right to appropriate health services to facilitate attainment of these goals.

"On analysis of the findings more needs to be done, especially in relation to admission to adult wards, the provision of healthcare rights information, and compliance with Scottish Government guidance on the provision of education and on the nutritional content of food in hospital. We now look forward to working with those in the sector to implement the recommendations within the report."

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