

Groundswell

Out of homelessness

Health Guide

Hospital discharge planning for patients experiencing homelessness



What is safe hospital discharge?

Safe hospital discharge is when a healthcare professional caring for a person experiencing homelessness conducts a health assessment or action plan when preparing for someone to leave the hospital. This process needs to be **initiated as soon as possible** on admission. This raises the issues of:

- A person's status, i.e.: whether they are homeless or housed.
- If housed, what is the state of the accommodation?
- How the person's homelessness or housing is related to their health and care needs.

The aim is to plan for the **most suitable and safest discharge**, where a person's needs are met to improve their health.

Which questions can you ask a patient to help a hospital discharge to be safe?



- Have you got somewhere safe to stay tonight?
- Where are you staying?
- Do you feel safe there?
(A referral to Safeguarding might be needed if not).
- Do you need support with transport to where you're staying?
- What are the conditions of the accommodation you are living in? (Is there mould/damp/noise, a shared bathroom, access to laundry facilities, access to a kitchen, access to a fridge, stairs, and what floor is the accommodation on?).
- Do you have support needs?
- Do you have someone who supports you or cares for you, such as a Keyworker, Social Worker, Advocate, or Caseworker? If so, can the hospital contact them?
- Are you registered with a GP? Can you access your GP?
- Do you need help with:
 - Shopping
 - Cooking
 - Dressing
 - Laundry
 - Taking medication
 - Personal washing
 - Finance
 - Budget management
 - Cleaning of the property?
- Do you have a disability that causes problems with accessing and/or using services? i.e. mobility issues, dyslexia, memory issues?
- Do you have difficulties with walking? Is the accommodation accessible – what are the problems, are there stairs, is there a lift (working), do you have falls, can you access washing facilities?
- Do you need support to remember, and to get to, appointments?
- Do you need help with taking medication?
- Are you in receipt of benefits?

Recommendations when someone you are supporting is in hospital



- Plan hospital discharge as soon as possible – preferably on arrival and raise concerns with relevant agencies who can help as soon as possible.
- If the hospital has one, refer the patient to the Inclusion Health Team or Homelessness Team in the hospital on arrival.
- Involve the patient in the planning of their discharge. Ensure they understand their discharge notes, and that they feel safe to raise concerns and ask for what they need.
- If they have no home, or nowhere safe to go, make a **HRA (Homelessness Reduction Act)** referral to the Local Authority. This is called Duty to Refer and became law in 2017.
- Assess care, housing, mental health and capacity, including an assessment at the place where the person is being discharged to.
- Find out the contact details of someone you can contact for help with a safe discharge.
- Arrange an MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Team) to plan safe discharge. A multi-disciplinary response may be needed, which could include representatives from housing (Local Authority, Housing Association or hostel), Adult Social Care Social Worker (in hospital or in the community), Physiotherapy and/or Occupational Therapy, primary health care (GP, nurse), Case Worker/Support Worker from the day centre, Outreach Worker, and Substance Misuse Worker.
- Keep records about patients with experience of homelessness who are admitted and the outcomes of care to help raise awareness of the wider situation and inform future practice.

A safe discharge might include referrals to other services or an additional assessment to help meet the needs of the individual.

Useful resources

1. Improving hospital admission and discharge for people who are homeless
2. Pathway - Beyond the Ward
3. Adult safeguarding and homelessness: a briefing on positive practice
4. Safe and effective discharge of homeless hospital patients

Everyone has the right to good health and to access healthcare. People experiencing homelessness face health inequalities, they are often excluded from information and services. That's why Groundswell produces accessible health guidance for people experiencing homelessness and those who support them, so informed decisions can be made about their health.

All our health guides are created alongside people with experience of homelessness and reviewed by relevant professionals.

www.groundswell.org.uk

Socials: @ItsGroundswell

