

Media Release

10 March 2016

Help mid Essex NHS services to help you – choose well

The Accident and Emergency Department at Broomfield Hospital has been under intense pressure this week, with record numbers of patients attending.

Some patients who arrived at Broomfield had the types of injury or condition that A&E is there to help with. But many people had more minor conditions that could have been treated by their local pharmacist or GP.

Please remember, A&E is for serious and life-threatening emergencies only, such as a loss of consciousness, a very serious state of confusion, persistent severe chest pain or breathing difficulties. It is not the right place to go to if you're suffering from common winter ailments, such as coughs, colds, fever or diarrhoea and vomiting.

If people come to A&E with these complaints, people in genuine need of A&E services may end up waiting longer. There are more appropriate healthcare options for minor illnesses and accidents. Along with self-care where possible, people can visit their local pharmacy to receive healthcare advice – pharmacists are highly trained medical professionals who can suggest appropriate medicines and refer on to other services if they see a need.

Dr Donald McGeachy, Medical Director at Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "Pressure on Broomfield A&E has been huge this week due to the sheer number of people going there. We are urging the public to choose the health service they use wisely and to think twice before going to A&E."

"Your local pharmacist can help with a range of minor conditions and refer you to a more appropriate service if you need it. You don't need an appointment to see them, and many pharmacists have a private consultation room."

"NHS111 is there for you when you need medical help fast but it's not an emergency, assessing your needs, offering advice and also directing you to the service that can help you best. Seeking help and advice from them, or your GP if you need to, could help you avoid an unnecessary trip to A&E."

ENDS

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Notes to Editor:

- Attendance at the Broomfield Hospital Emergency Department (ED) reached unprecedented levels on Monday 7 March, with the highest number of patients in recent times. There were 323 patients seen through the day, the majority with minor injuries and conditions more appropriate for other healthcare settings.
- This demand led to wait times for ED patients sometimes in excess of 6 hours.
- Mid Essex CCG and Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust are currently working with NHS England on improving patient flow through the hospital and getting people “Home First”, but pressure from patient numbers and the current junior doctors’ industrial action are making this work more challenging.