

Meet Joanne

Joanne Edwards

Virtual Wards Team Leader at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

“ I’ve been working on virtual wards (also known as Hospital at Home) for about a year. Before this, I spent 20 years as a clinical manager in patient flow – so I know nearly every nurse and consultant.

Initially, we were doing Covid oximetry, carrying out basic monitoring and assessing patients daily while they were at home. We started to see the benefits of keeping people out of hospital, so we extended it into pathways, starting with respiratory. We now care for patients with conditions including respiratory, cardiology, sepsis and others.

Patients wear an armband at home that measures things like their oxygen levels, heart rate, temperature, how active they are, and even whether they’ve had a fall.

Before the patient goes home, we set them up and show them how to use the equipment. We show them and their relatives exactly what they need to do and do a test call with nurses in our hub so they can see if they do need to call, a member of the team will pick up. We then arrange a time to call them the next day to check in.

If someone is struggling to use the equipment at home, one of our nurses will go out.

Back in the hospital, we monitor the patient from 8am to 8pm. Patient observations are automatically captured every 15 minutes. If an observation comes up red, we ring or video call the patient and intervene if necessary. A lot of the time it’s a matter of reassuring them, sometimes we’ll implement medication, and, if needed, we will escalate.

We do actually feel like we’re on a hospital ward. We have a handover in the morning, everyone is given their allocated patients and, for continuity, the same colleague checks in with the same patient.

There’s a designated helpline patients and relatives can ring which comes straight through to us. We get lots of calls from the families, and it’s just so nice to be able to put things in place for them.

It’s important patients have support at home from relatives and carers, but we’ve found relatives love that their loved ones are at home – they’re safe, they can visit whenever they want. It’s so much better.

This service is very patient-centred. When you call the patient, you can actually see they’re so much better and happier, you can hear it in their voices. They also tell you so much more when they’re at home – there’s more privacy. For example, some patients won’t tell you they’ve been having issues with their bowels when they’re on a busy ward with just a curtain around them.

Everyone loves being on a virtual ward. We love it. The patients love it. Their families love it. You get such good vibes from everyone seeing patients are so much happier back home. They’ve got their families, their pets, they eat and drink when they want to, their mental health is so much better. They can do what they want, when they want. And it’s so much quieter than on a hospital ward.

We’ve been getting excellent feedback. Patients feel so much more confident, especially knowing if they ring us, we will pick up and help. It also takes the pressure off families having to make any decisions, when they know they can ring us.

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We love it.
The patients
love it. Their
families love it.



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