

Intermediate Care – Agreeing a Common Definition

1. There are numerous definitions of Intermediate Care promoted across the UK some of which are narrowly defined and others more loosely defined. It would therefore be helpful to agree a working definition of Intermediate Care for the group so all members are clear about the parameters of the term and share a common understanding.

2. The Oxford and Anglia Intermediate Care Project definition is:

“Intermediate Care can be described as those services that do not require the resources of a general hospital but are beyond the scope of the traditional primary care team. This includes:

- Intermediate care which substitutes for elements of hospital care (substitutional care); and
- Intermediate care which integrates a variety of services for people whose health care needs are complex and in transition. (complex care)
(Oxford and Anglia Intermediate Care Project, 1997)

This definition fits in quite neatly to the developing tradition of extended primary care teams in Scotland delivering a service either in the patients own home or as close to the patient’s own home as possible.

3. A more recent generic definition has been used by the Change Agent Team which also indicates the broad range of services included is as follows:

“A service provided on a short term basis at home or in a residential setting (usually about 6 weeks) for people who need some degree of rehabilitation and recuperation. It’s aims are to prevent unnecessary admission to hospital, facilitate early hospital discharge and prevent premature admission to residential care” (Making Connections, 2006)

The Intermediate Care Learning Network in Scotland supports a whole systems approach to service design and delivery and therefore supports the development of Intermediate Care services as part of a range of services needed to maintain people in their own homes wherever possible. There must be effective communication between all parts of the system and care must be taken to ensure that there are clear links between specialist care teams, primary care services and social work services. Intermediate care services therefore are able to act as bridges at key points in transition in the patient’s journey from hospital to home (or visa versa) and from illness to recovery.

4. Key Characteristics of Services in Scotland

In Scotland it is clear that Intermediate Care services are an important part of whole systems planning as emphasised in recent policy documents. Partnerships for Care emphasised the importance of supporting people with long term conditions and the need for effective partnership working and co-ordination of care across the health and social care spectrum.

“The Framework for Joint Services for Older People” highlights the kind of joint services including intermediate care for older people who need enhanced care.

More recently Delivering for Health supports the policy aims of providing health care in local communities wherever possible, supporting carers and promoting self care wherever possible. Intermediate care solutions can also assist in reducing delayed transfers of care - a further priority area for partnerships.

The key features of Intermediate Care in Scotland were discussed at the last Intermediate Care learning network meeting and it was agreed included:

- Integrated and focused services;
- Maximise Independent Living;
- Prevent unnecessary hospital admission;
- Support timely discharge;
- Focused on those whose needs are complex and in transition;
- Relevant to all adult care groups;
- Time limited and focused interventions according to the needs of the user;
- Flexible timescales although recognition that there is a need for intervention to be time limited;
- Provides an ongoing rehabilitative approach; and
- Need for clear patient pathway which connects services for patients.

The services can be provided in a range of settings including:

Individuals own homes including sheltered housing and very sheltered housing
NHS Day hospitals and LA day centres
Designated residential and nursing homes
Community Hospitals

Examples of Intermediate Care services can include:

- Community assessment and treatment teams;
- Joint community rehabilitation teams;
- Rapid response services;
- Intensive care at home schemes;
- Extra care housing developments and telecare developments;
- Alternative use of residential and nursing home provision;
- Innovative use of community hospital facilities; and
- The work of extended primary care teams.

5. **Recommendations**

The Intermediate Care learning network adopt the broad generic definition of Intermediate Care outlined in this paper as a working brief for the group.