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A University Teaching Trust

The Willows
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Dear Carer, Relative or Friend

I would like to welcome you to the The Willows.

As a carer, relative or friend, you will be acutely aware of the impact mental illness has not only on the life of the person you care for, but your own.

By working together, we can maximise opportunities to benefit the person we are caring for.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain what the unit does and how we aim to involve you as much as we can.

The Willows is a rehabilitation inpatient unit providing care for people who have severe and enduring mental illness, providing an alternative approach to prolonged stays on acute inpatient wards. We also take a small number of people direct from the community.

We aim to help patients to enhance their quality of life and improve their abilities to cope with day-to-day living whilst living with an illness that may be life-long.

Care is provided in a friendly, homely, relaxed and supportive therapeutic environment where service users are encouraged to be fully involved in their care and focus on their personal strengths.

A structured individualised plan of care is developed which includes: agreed rehabilitation goals to work towards and regular activities both on the unit and in the community.

Recovery takes time and residents may need to stay in the unit for up to 15 months in order to develop coping strategies and to understand themselves and their illness better before being discharged, with the right support, to the community.

The Willows has 38 beds (eight of which provide locked rehabilitation for men who need intensive support in a 'safe' environment). The unit aims to monitor mental and physical health, and to assist and support the residents in all aspects of daily life such as self-care, diet, maintaining activities and interests etc.

The unit is staffed by a large team of nurses, medical staff, occupational therapists, psychologists, administration and housekeeping staff who all work together as a multidisciplinary team. A range of facilities support resident rehabilitation.

If you are a carer for the person admitted to our ward, we value the work you do as a carer in that capacity and appreciate the challenges this can make on your time, independence and emotional wellbeing. We appreciate your need for information whether you are a carer, relative or friend and would like to make you aware of the steps we are taking to enhance your opportunities to be involved.

As part of our work to support and involve primary (the main) carer, we promise to:

- Make contact with you within 72 hours of admission.
- Provide information via our carers board which can be viewed during your visits to the unit. This will carry information about:
 - our carers lead – please speak to the matron (or their deputy in their absence) if you have any questions or concerns or wish to make us aware of anything about the person you care for
 - the carers forum which meets twice a year
 - a range of relevant support services/agencies including advocacy

To strengthen our commitment to support carers and family members we will:

- provide further training for our staff to make them more 'carer aware'
- introduce a consent form which allows patients to specify exactly what information (if any) we can disclose to the person(s) of their choice. A sample of this form is included in the carers information pack. We hope that by implementing this form, it will be easier for the patient to decide if and what information we can disclose to you to help you to understand their current situation. Please note that we are still bound by our legal duty to respect patient confidentiality unless the patient expressly gives us permission to disclose information to you.

Hopefully, the carers pack, together with the carers board will provide you with most of the information you need, but please don't hesitate to contact me if you are unsure of anything or need any further information.

Matron.