



News Release

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Trust appeal to use the right service this winter

As the cold weather continues, the Southern Health and Social Care Trust is encouraging the public to help health and social services cope with the extra pressures faced.

Acting Chief Executive, Mrs Mairead McAlinden says: "This icy weather brings with it increased injuries from slips and falls and the cold aggravates respiratory conditions. We are seeing increased levels of activity across all of our services. Staff are doing everything they can to ensure that all patients are treated as quickly and safely as possible but we appeal to everyone to help us to help those who really need us. Hospital Emergency departments are for people who are seriously ill or injured. Remember there are other services that can help you."

Mrs McAlinden is also encouraging those using the GP out of hours service to phone first on 0870 600 6009. She adds: "The GP out of hours service should be contacted only if you have an urgent medical condition that cannot wait to be treated during normal surgery hours. Many patients can be given advice over the phone to meet their needs and do not need to come to a centre. Patients who don't phone first may have to wait longer to be seen or be redirected to a more appropriate service.

"Everyone has a role to play in helping services to cope with the extra pressure faced over winter by choosing the right service. For example your local pharmacist is an expert in medicines and if you have a minor ailment a visit to your pharmacist may be all you need to do. For other illnesses seek your GP's advice.

"Staff are working extremely hard to meet the increased demand for services caused by the cold weather but we would ask you to please help us to help you."

ENDS

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