

Brief overview of the Health Directorate



Introduction

The Health Service based, at the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital (KEMH), aims to provide good quality, accessible healthcare to our population, working within the limitations of our resources, our remote geographic location and our financial restraints. Within these limitations the Health Service strives to provide the highest standard of service to all our patients, no matter where they live within our Islands. We pride ourselves in delivering quality healthcare that puts the patients' needs at the heart of what we do. The Department of Health and Social Services facilitates this mission by providing primary, community and secondary healthcare in the Islands for the resident population of the Islands (which is approximately 3,400 people), as well as offering a range of social services to vulnerable people in the community.

The department also provides secondary care services to around 2,400 military personnel and associated civilians at Mount Pleasant Airfield, 35 miles south-west of Stanley. We also offer urgent and emergency care services to approximately 60,000 people who visit the islands each year which include the crews of the foreign fishing vessels who fish in South Atlantic waters.

The primary and secondary health care facilities are based at the KEMH in Stanley, the only hospital in the Islands, however is the health facility from where all health services work from. The facility has a 29-bed ward with a small accident and emergency department, Theatre, an acute ward with a two-bedded intensive care unit, an isolation unit, and a maternity bed, and 7 long stay nursing care beds in single rooms. Primary care is provided from the primary care suite. Community services including mental health, community care, health visiting audiology and professions allied to health Dental services are also located in the hospital and a well-equipped pharmacy dispenses all prescriptions and provides an 'over the counter' medicine sales and health advice service.

KEMH has a range of medical, dental, allied health professionals and nursing staff, including community psychiatric nurses, midwives health visitor and community staff, qualified to UK standards or recognised equivalents. Wherever possible, the health service uses UK standards/guidelines.

The Social Services team provides support for a wide range of people with social care needs, including vulnerable children and adults and people with disabilities and/or long-term mental health problems. The team provides the Islands' probation service.

Specialist services are provided by a range of visiting specialists. These include an ophthalmologist, gynaecologist, ENT surgeon, Orthopaedic surgeon, Psychiatrist, and Gastro-enterologist, Urologist, and Podiatrist, and other occasional specialists. Patients who cannot wait for their visits, or who need access to other diagnostic or treatment services are referred either to UK NHS hospitals or in Chile. Patients who need emergency treatment that the hospital cannot provide may be flown by air ambulance to Chile or Uruguay.

Care to remote farm settlements is provided by the GP's via telephone consultations and regular visits. In an emergency situation, the doctor can be taken to the settlement, or the patient evacuated to Stanley, using the Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS).

Facts & Figures

Health of the Nation

The general standard of health in the Islands is good, with a pattern of disease similar to that of most developed countries. There are slightly lower rates of cancer generally, but higher rates of lung disease. There are however significant levels of mild to moderate mental health problems and alcohol abuse. To date, problems of drug misuse are virtually unknown, as is HIV/AIDS. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the elderly population (approximately 87% in 10 years), coupled with an increasing birth rate, which has created an inevitable increase in demand on health and social services.

History of the Department

Before 1982, the Islands had a small, basic hospital service on the site of the current hospital. After the conflict in 1982 the hospital was run as a joint service with the military. In April 1984 the hospital was burnt down with the loss of 8 lives. It was rebuilt, and re-opened in 1987.

The hospital remained a joint civilian-military staffed service gradually moving to being completely civilian run in 2000 although the MOD continues to contribute a significant proportion of the costs of running the service.

The Social Services department was a much more recent development. Originally, there was a 'welfare' service provided by a team of unqualified staff. The first qualified Social Worker arrived in around 1999 and we now have a complement of three fully qualified Social Workers and the team has recently been increased to include a full time Probation Officer. Initially based in the hospital, the team moved off site to a new base called the 'Welcome Centre' at the east end of Stanley in 2002 and still is based there.

Finances

The expenditure of the Medical Department set for 2016//17 is approximately £10.9 million, and is expected to be offset by income of £2.4 million mainly from charges for treatment of tourists and visiting fishermen. A significant proportion of this funding (over £1 million) is derived from the Ministry of Defence, (MOD). This is done via a cost-sharing agreement enshrined in a Memorandum of Understanding between Falkland Islands Government (FIG) and the MOD.

Most services, including prescriptions, are free to residents. However, charges are made for some dental procedures, for spectacles, travel vaccines and a limited number of medical services. The Government reserves the right to alter these charges when it is deemed appropriate. Charges are also levied for patients who are not entitled to free treatment in the Falkland Islands.

Facilities and Staffing

All medical, dental and community health services are based in KEMH.

In close proximity to the hospital there are 3 blocks of sheltered housing consisting of a total of 22 units, providing either single person or married accommodation. Recently there has been a community service provision for those with identified needs within Stanley. The Health and Social Services department itself consists of approximately 100 plus full time equivalent (FTE) staff. KEMH currently has an FTE staff complement of 5.3 doctors and a range of nurses and other health professionals including a Theatre team, a Health Visitor, a District Nurse, Mental Health workers, a Physiotherapist, a Speech and Language Therapist and Dentists. The pharmacy team is run by a qualified Pharmacist. The Hospital also has the normal range of supporting and domestic services including engineering and catering.

Services

Emergency Services

Minor and major emergencies of all kinds are dealt with initially in the small casualty department. During the day the department is staffed by a nurse rotated from the ward. At night and weekends the nurse provides on call cover. The Medical Officers (Doctors) are rostered to provide emergency care on a daily rota. All Doctors attend an Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS), and a local trauma course is also run on a regular basis. There is also a full theatre team on duty throughout the normal working week and on call at all other times.

The hospital also provides an ambulance service. The drivers do not have paramedic training, but they are always accompanied on call by the casualty nurse or a doctor. In addition, patients can be moved to the hospital from the settlements via FIGAS and the Mount Pleasant Airbase provides Search and Rescue helicopters to transport seriously injured patients from all parts of the Islands to and from the hospital.

Very seriously ill patients can be provided with intensive care in the 2-bedded ITU unit. Patients who cannot be managed in KEMH are stabilised and evacuated out of the islands either via a Chilean civilian aeromedical evacuation team to Santiago or via military aircraft to Montevideo. The latter route is used only in the most pressing emergencies, on average two to three times each year.

The department has a major incident plan, which forms part of the overall major incident plan for the islands, which is also linked into the MoD.

The Social Services department provides emergency child protection service out of hours.

Primary Care

The Doctors provide general practitioner services modelled on those in the UK. Surgeries are usually held twice a day on each working week day. Appointments are normally booked via reception with some appointments available as on the day.

Each week, one of the doctors makes a trip to 'camp' (the countryside). Each settlement is visited approximately every 6 weeks in rotation.

The Practice Nurse runs long term disease management clinics, a well woman service (including cervical screening) and the drug (including anticoagulation) monitoring service. We operate a recall system for patients with asthma and diabetes.

Two dentists provide dental care for the population, supported by Dental Nurses and a part-time Hygienist. There is no resident qualified optometrist, although a UK Optometrist visits at intervals of (normally) about six months.

Preventive Services

As well as the secondary prevention services described above, the practice offers a range of primary prevention services including smoking cessation and weight management.

Our limited resources inevitably restrict us from doing more, but a range of staff (including the health visitor, social workers, CPN and the dental team) have a 'preventive' element to their role.

Diagnostics

We have a one-room X-ray unit. Areas of study include Intravenous urogram (IVU), Orthopantomogram (OPG) and theatre mobile studies. All images are digitised and specialist advice/interpretation is provided at arm's length by a consultant radiologist. There is currently no facility for MR or CT.

We undertake a bowel screening programme for over 56's and 'at risk' people identified through their family history or symptomatically. All routine haematology, biochemistry and microbiology tests are completed by the hospital laboratory, with histopathology and more specialised tests and screening, (including cervical cytology), going to a variety of UK hospitals.

A small blood bank is supplied on a monthly basis from the UK. In addition, an 'emergency donor' panel is organised by the department. Volunteers are screened twice a year and called to give blood at the time of need.

Secondary/Inpatient Care

Ward nurses are expected to nurse patients across all specialities (including supporting the midwives), all ages and all nationalities and need including patients undergoing elective surgery undertaken by visiting specialists, palliative care, mental health needs, children and babies, intensive care, coronary care, trauma etc.

Ward occupancy levels average around 50%, but this can change dramatically in the event of a specialist visit or major incident. Ward staffing levels are generally good and the standard of nursing care excellent.

Patients are nursed in single-sex bays of 2, 4 or 6 beds. ITU normally has two beds, but has capacity for up to 4 patients. The isolation unit has one bed and there are two single-bedded side rooms.

Foreign fishermen and tourists present an additional challenge as health care has to take account of cultural differences and overcome language barriers.

Specialist Treatment and Advice

Patients who cannot be treated in the Islands can be referred to UK NHS hospitals. For investigative and more minor procedures patients may be referred to South America if the cost analysis indicates this would be good value and meet the patient's needs.

A variety of specialists visit on an annual or biennial basis, depending on need. As noted previously, specialist services provided in this way include Ophthalmologist, Gynaecologist, ENT surgeon, Orthopaedic surgeon, Psychiatrist, and Gastro-Enterologist, Urologist, and Podiatrist, and other occasional specialists. Visiting specialists provide consultation and surgery for some elective cases which can wait until the visit. We also arrange other visits on an ad hoc basis such as occupational and speech and language therapy.

Community Services

The Health Visitor and School Nurse are the only staff employed by health purely for children and young people. They work closely with the families' schools and other agencies to provide a universal service to children and young people with an increased service to those with an identified need.

The Community Team provide care to those with an assessed need in their own homes.

Mental health services are provided by the Community Psychiatric Nurses, who are the only mental health practitioners in the Islands. They provide support for people with severe and enduring mental illness, as well as those with mild to moderate illness, and with problems of alcohol misuse. They also provide advice to the in-patient nursing team.

Pharmacy

The pharmacy in the Hospital is the only one on the Islands and is staffed by a full time Pharmacist and 2 Technicians and an Assistant. The vast majority of items issued are by prescription. The pharmacy also sells a limited range of over the counter medicines.

The 'Camp' populations are sent medicine through the post once the doctor prescribes them. Each settlement has a medicine chest with basic drug requirements and these are replenished as directed. Ships' medicine chests are also provided and replenished as needed. Stock for the pharmacy is generally obtained from the UK.

Therapy Services

In the Falklands Islands physiotherapy is provided by a single therapist working across all specialties including: orthopaedics, neurology, elderly care, paediatrics, (including children with disabilities), and sports injuries. The majority of the workload is outpatient based, but the physiotherapist is also required to cover the ward.

We have one Occupational Therapist who provides a service aimed at meeting the needs of the older and vulnerable population although may give advice for children if required.

Currently there is one qualified Speech and Language Therapist who is aided by an assistant. The team work closely with the schools. All age groups are catered for: infants and toddlers, pre-school children, school children (a service is provided to the schools), adults and the elderly. The service also includes provision of hearing aids.

Maternity Care

There are on average 30 births each year. Our small Midwifery team is supported by the GPs who have additional training in obstetrics and gynaecology. The team are responsible for providing ante-post and intra-partum care. The surgeon is also trained to undertake caesarean sections.

Elderly Care

For those that live independently in the community the recently established community care team provides care where assessed as necessary. The team consists of the community services lead with Social Work assistants and Staff Nurses as well as community carers. In the future there will be a residential facility which will support those who cannot live at home.

The Social Services department also provides some support and assistance to older people and can provide financial assistance in the form of an 'Attendance Allowance'.

Those elderly people who need 24 hour nursing care which cannot be provided at home are looked after in the 7-bedded elderly care unit at KEMH. These people will move to the new facility.

There is a 'Day Centre' in the hospital from which activities are offered on two days a week vulnerable people and a dining room which provides meals daily. We also provide 'Meals on Wheels' in the community and meals for prisoners.

Paediatrics

There is no dedicated paediatric service. As noted previously the Health Visitor provides a universal health visiting service, primarily to under school age, and a School Nurse provides a universal service to those children and young people of school age. The Speech and Language Therapist also works predominantly with children. Children needing inpatient care will be nursed with their parents or carers being asked to stay with them at all times.

Estates and Engineering

The hospital looks after its own estates with a team of qualified estates and bio-medical engineers. The team provide routine, planned maintenance as well as an emergency repairs service. They also plan and manage capital development schemes.

Support Services

The clinical services are supported by a highly dedicated team of administrative and ancillary staff including Receptionists, Medical Secretaries, Cooks, Cleaners, Laundry Assistants, Drivers and Handypersons.

Dentistry

The Dental department is responsible for providing dental services to the civilian population of the Falkland Islands. The department is also responsible for providing urgent treatment for temporary visitors such as tourists and fishermen. The team undertakes occasional general anaesthetic procedures on behalf of the Mount Pleasant Complex.

There are three surgeries, all last upgraded in 2007. There is a small laboratory, though the majority of laboratory work is sent overseas. Dental equipment and supplies are regularly updated to maintain a high standard of cross infection control. The hospital x-ray department provides OPG's immediately on request.

A wide range of treatments are undertaken, including endodontics, complex extractions, minor oral surgery, basic prosthetics and orthodontics and emergency treatment including facial trauma. Dental extractions and oral surgery requiring general anaesthesia are undertaken in the operating theatre of the hospital under full support of theatre and anaesthetic staff.

Orthodontic treatments are limited. Most are carried out using removable appliance therapy. For reasons of both logistics and cost, FIG cannot provide fixed appliance orthodontic treatment and will not fund it overseas, except in the most severe cases.

Oral health in the islands has been very poor historically across all age ranges, largely due to poor access to dental services in the past. One key area of activity is the annual screening programme for school children. Those who need treatment are then encouraged to attend the dental department. Recent audit results from the screening and treatment programme show improvements in the dental health of school children.

The majority of dental treatment is provided free of charge to residents. However, charges are made for certain aesthetic items such as veneers, complex treatments, and the restoration to dental fitness of those who have neglected their teeth.

Out of hours emergency dentistry is undertaken by the two dental teams on weekly rotation. Call outs are generally triaged by the casualty team in order to minimise the frequency of attendance for the dentist. Evening call outs are restricted to facial trauma. Weekend call outs are generally for foreign fishermen who are in port for one day only and need an extraction: this can usually be predicted the day before.

The dental officers co-operate with the military dental officer at Mount Pleasant by providing occasional emergency cover and support for any referrals for oral surgery under general anaesthetic requiring the operating theatre in the KEMH.

Occupational Health

The department reports to Human Resources and is responsible for the provision of a basic Occupational Health service which in the main deals with general medical screening for employment purposes.

Quality & Standards

The department are proud of the quality of service that is provided and endeavours to maintain standards in a variety of ways, as set out below.

Professional Registration

It is a requirement of working in the Falkland Islands that all qualified staff are registered with the appropriate UK registering body or be eligible to register by dint of registration with a UK-recognised international equivalent. These might include Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, other Commonwealth and EC countries and the USA, depending on the profession.

As far as possible, we seek to employ staff who are familiar with the professional culture and approaches of the UK NHS so that they can be assimilated easily into our service which operates along NHS lines.

It is an employment condition for all potential staff to undergo an enhanced police check prior to joining the staff complement.

Advisers

We also have a number of advisers who supplement our service and either advise us at a distance or visit periodically. Advisers include:

- Surgical and anaesthetic advisers who vet all applicants for the surgeon and anaesthetist posts, and review the service on a periodic basis;
- A range of engineering advisers who review systems and procedures e.g. decontamination, medical gases etc;
- A Consultant Microbiologist who advises on infection control policy, antibiotics policy etc;
- A Dental Advisor who provides dental public health input to the service;
- Radiation Protection Inspection/advisors who assess our compliance with radiation protection standards.

NSFs, NICE and Other UK Guidance

As we are not part of the NHS, we are not obliged to follow UK guidance and adhere to UK standards. However, we endeavour to do so as far as reasonably practical within our slender resources and isolated circumstances.

Clinical Governance

The implementation of our clinical and healthcare governance framework service is taken forward by the Health Care Governance Facilitator. The framework is drawn from UK models and standards of good practice.

Continuing Professional Development

We have a local programme of training and CPD which includes mandatory training such as fire, manual handling, and infection control. Our accredited trainers offer Immediate Life Support (ILS) courses and a local version of the Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) course. A number of our health care and social work assistants have achieved NVQs at Levels 2, 3 and 4.

In addition, we provide opportunities for many staff to train overseas each year in order to maintain registration and further develop the skills needed to run our services.

Infection Control

We have stringent infection control standards which are monitored by our infection control team and committee.

Working Environment

KEMH is generally a pleasant place to work. Most UK-based health professionals react with surprise to the levels of cleanliness, the range of services we provide and the sophistication of medical equipment. The Ward area has recently been upgraded and the environment for our elderly residents has improved significantly. However, the facility is now over 30 years old and a review of updating and upgrading is being undertaken.