

Specialist Estates Services Notification 24/11

21 June 2024

For action by:

Board Level Directors (Fire), Fire Safety Managers, Fire Safety Advisors - NHS Health Boards and Trusts

For information only:

Chief Executives, Estates/Facilities Directors and Managers

Copy to: Head of Capital Estates and Facilities Department of Health and Social Care, Welsh Government

Dear Colleague,

Bariatric/Plus Size Patient Emergency Evacuation Procedures - General Guidance Note

Emergency evacuation of Bariatric/Plus Size patients is a challenging scenario that relies on effective training, appropriate equipment and robust procedures developed to cater for the specific needs of the individual patient.

It is recognised that a consistent approach across NHS Wales may not be achievable due to factors such as varying clinical needs, differing procedures, equipment and availability of suitable accommodation. However, the attached best practice guidance note, prepared and endorsed by the all-Wales Fire Safety Manager's Forum, is intended to be an aide-memoir highlighting a series of questions to consider when admitting Bariatric/Plus Size patients.

Accordingly, it is recommended that NHS Organisations consider this guidance when admitting Bariatric/Plus Size patients and reviewing their associated fire safety management arrangements.

Any enquiries on the content of the guidance note should be addressed to Stuart Hanger, Fire Safety Advisor stuart.hanger@wales.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely



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BARIATRIC/PLUS SIZE PATIENT EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE NOTE

This Guidance Note has been prepared and endorsed by the all-Wales Fire Safety Manager's Forum in conjunction with NWSSP-SES¹ to assist NHS Wales Organisations in the management of Bariatric/Plus Size patients in the event of an emergency evacuation. It is recognised that a consistent and uniform approach to the management of Bariatric/Plus Size patients across the whole of NHS Wales may not be achievable due to factors such as varying clinical needs, differing procedures, equipment and availability of suitable accommodation.

It is therefore logical that a best practice approach be promoted, albeit one which is adaptable to the specific requirements of each NHS Organisation. Involvement of other relevant external agencies, such as Local Authority Fire & Rescue Services (FRS) should also be considered.

From a fire safety perspective, whilst the aim should be to treat the patients in an area which offers suitable alternative horizontal escape routes, the patients' clinical needs will usually dictate their location within a hospital. This may not be optimum in terms of the fire strategy.

The questions below highlight aspects that should be considered to ensure effective evacuation procedures are implemented when admitting Bariatric patients. This note is not intended to supersede existing policies or procedures, rather provide an additional set of guidance to ensure a level of best practice and consistency is being adopted across the NHS Wales estate as far as is practicable.

It should be noted that the necessity for robust effective evacuation procedures for all persons is a statutory requirement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Note: For simplicity, the term Bariatric will be referred to throughout the guidance.

¹ NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership - Specialist Estates Services

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES WHEN ADMITTING BARIATRIC PATIENTS

- Are there adequate provisions for the care of Bariatric patients within your premises including suitable beds, equipment and accessible locations?
- Where a Bariatric patient is admitted or is due for admission, is there a policy in place addressing bariatric patient admissions, taking into consideration the requirements needed for a safe and successful emergency evacuation?
- Where admission of a Bariatric patient is unplanned, which may include sites not generally suited to these patients, are there sufficient measures in place to cope with the potential for an emergency evacuation should it be required?
- Considering the nature of the patient, in the event of an emergency, can they be evacuated safely recognising the premises layout, constraints and fire strategy e.g. is access to and from bedrooms/ward areas wide enough for the movement of Bariatric beds?
- Are there sufficient numbers of trained staff available to accommodate the evacuation of Bariatric patients in the event of an emergency?
 - *Note: Staff levels vary depending on day and night shift patterns, therefore staffing should account for all occupational periods. It should also be noted that the use of some evacuation aids require the combined weight of staff to be in excess of that of the patient in order to move the patient safely.*
- Moving and handling of Bariatric patients can be a complex task - has consideration been given to the medical condition of the patient, as well as their capabilities and needs when preparing for an emergency evacuation?²
- Dependent upon the location of the patient, whether it be at ground floor level or above, what provisions have been made regarding the availability of suitable rescue/emergency equipment for the movement of the patient, whether it be horizontally, vertically or both i.e.
 - Is rescue/emergency equipment readily available on site?
 - Are staff trained on the use of the specific evacuation equipment?
 - Where equipment is not readily available, is there a process in place for equipment to be leased from designated providers, for the duration of the patients stay on site?
- Has a risk assessment and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) been completed upon admission of the patient, detailing such things as height, weight, shape and ability to move; all of which may help to determine the level of assistance required in the event of an emergency?³

² Clinical needs should always be considered in light of specialist equipment that may be required to accompany the patient.

³ The assessment should adopt the TILE (Task; Individual Capability; Load; Environment) principles associated with Manual Handling.