

Report to: **East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)**

Date: **16th June 2008**

By: **Chairman of the Older People's Mental Health Services Task Group**

Title of report: **Older People's Mental Health Services – report back from Task Group**

Purpose of report: **To outline the Task Group's interim response to Sussex Partnership Trust's proposals for in-patient beds currently located at Beechwood Unit, Uckfield and Milton Court Unit, Eastbourne.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOSC is recommended to:

- 1. Endorse the Task Group's interim response as outlined in section 3.**
 - 2. Request that the Task Group meets again in July to review the responses to consultation and to make further responses to the Trust as appropriate.**
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1. Background

1.1 In March 2008 HOSC considered Sussex Partnership Trust's proposal to close inpatient acute assessment beds for older people with organic mental health needs at the Beechwood Unit in Uckfield as part of the ongoing strategy of increasing community based provision. The Trust indicated that the balance between inpatient beds and community services is not currently appropriate and that there are sufficient unused, or inappropriately used, beds for patients with organic mental health needs to withdraw the Beechwood beds without impacting on the Trust's ability to take the current number of patients requiring inpatient acute assessment.

1.2 HOSC also considered a further proposal to temporarily move acute assessment beds for older people with organic mental health needs from Milton Court Unit in Eastbourne to the vacated Beechwood Unit, pending the availability of suitable alternative accommodation in Eastbourne, at which point the beds will return. This latter proposal enables the County Council's Adult Social Care department to progress the expansion of its facilities at Milton Court but is unrelated to the proposed Beechwood closure. The proposed use of Beechwood to re-house the Milton Court beds is opportunistic.

1.3 The term 'organic' mental illness refers to age-related conditions like dementia as opposed to 'functional' mental illness which refers to conditions occurring at any age such as personality disorders. It is good practice for the two types of mental illness to be cared for in separate units. It should be noted that the units for both types of illness in East Sussex serve residents from across the county, rather than only their immediate surrounding area.

2. Task Group activity

2.1 The Task Group established by HOSC to examine the proposals in more detail comprises Cllr Healy (Chairman), Cllr Martin and Mr Chapman. The Task Group met for the first time on 14 April 2008 at which it agreed terms of reference (attached at appendix 1), questioned Trust representatives on the proposals in more detail and reviewed consultation plans.

2.2 The Task Group met for a second time on 30 May 2008 at the Beechwood Unit. This meeting incorporated a tour of the unit, review of data about both Beechwood and Milton Court requested from the Trust, and review of consultation materials. It was reported that the Primary

Care Trusts (PCTs), as commissioners of the services, had given their support to the proposals and agreed that consultation with stakeholders should commence from 2 June for 8 weeks.

2.3 The Task Group has explored a range of issues in relation to the proposals, notably regarding the proposed investment in community services as a result of the Beechwood closure and the issues of access to services for patients and carers.

3. Task Group report to HOSC

3.1 The Task Group has reached some interim conclusions about the proposals and seeks HOSC's endorsement of these. However, the Task Group also seeks an opportunity to meet again in July to review responses to the consultation. Interim conclusions are:

- a) The Task Group believes the direction of travel underlying the proposals is right. However, it is important to recognise that increasing investment in community based services will be required in order to support the strategy.
- b) Respite care is an important part of older people's mental health services and underpins the ability to offer community based care.
- c) The Task Group supports the use of the resources freed up by the closure of the beds at Beechwood to continue and extend the Partnership for Older People Programme funded community based services. It is important that all the resources from Beechwood are invested in community services for older people with organic mental health needs.
- d) The Task Group has some concerns about the fact that the Memory Assessment and Support Service covers one area only. The Group recommends that a robust evaluation is undertaken after one year of continued funding with a view to expanding the scheme cross-county and integrating it with other memory services if it is shown to be effective.
- e) Additional capacity may need to be available during the transition to extended community based services and this should be planned for.
- f) The Task group has some concerns about access to services but on balance believes the development of community based services is the right direction of travel and this inevitably means some consolidation of inpatient services. The existing units take patients from right across the county meaning that some patients/carers will have longer journeys but others will have shorter journeys (see appendix 2 for details of where patients come from).
- g) The Task Group notes that the centralisation of beds means that inpatient units will be located only in the coastal area of the county, raising concerns about how this would take account of the needs of rural areas. The Group recommends that the needs of rural areas are particularly considered when further developing community based services.
- h) The Task Group is pleased to see the positive partnership working between health and social care and notes that the proposed temporary move of Milton Court beds to Beechwood will support the upgrading of Milton Court by Adult Social Care.
- i) The move of Milton Court to Beechwood should be supported by advice and assistance with transport for relatives and carers.
- j) If a site can be found in the Eastbourne area before permanent accommodation is ready, the Milton Court beds should move back to Eastbourne as soon as possible.
- k) Consultation with stakeholders is important. The Task Group would like to meet again to review the outcomes of the consultation in order to ensure that issues raised by stakeholders are taken into account.

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Chairman, Older People's Mental Health Services Task Group

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HOSC Task Group – Older People’s Mental Health Inpatient Services

Role and Remit

Purpose of group

To review the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust’s proposals to close inpatient beds at Beechwood in Uckfield and to temporarily move inpatient beds from Milton Court in Eastbourne to Beechwood pending identification of a permanent site in Eastbourne, with particular focus on:

- How the proposals fit within the wider strategy for older people’s mental health services;
- Whether the case is made for a reduction in acute assessment beds for older people with organic mental health problems and a redirection of these resources into community based care;
- Consideration of the impact on access for patients, carers and families resulting from the proposals;
- Considering and commenting on the proposed approach to consultation.

The group’s findings will be reported back to HOSC to inform the Committee’s view on the proposals.

Membership

The Task Group comprises Cllr Beryl Healy, Cllr Eve Martin and Ralph Chapman. Support will be provided by Claire Lee, Scrutiny Lead Officer and Sam White, Scrutiny Support Officer.

Input from the NHS will primarily be provided through Andrew Dean, Associate Director - Older People’s and Forensic Services, Sussex Partnership NHS Trust and Martin Packwood – Joint Commissioning Manager for Mental Health, East Sussex PCTs.

Method of working and timescale

It is anticipated that the group will meet at least twice – once in April 2008 and once in late May/early June 2008. Between meetings work will be undertaken ‘virtually’ e.g. via email. The group will also visit Beechwood Unit.

The group will report to the HOSC meeting on 16 June 2008 initially, at which point the Committee may agree to conclude or extend the group’s work.

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