

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

Date: **24th September 2009**

By: **Director of Law and Personnel**

Title of report: **Community and inpatient care for older people with organic mental health needs**

Purpose of report: **A progress report on the implementation of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's proposals for inpatient acute assessment beds and associated developments in community services for older people with organic mental health needs such as dementia.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOSC is recommended to:

- 1. Consider and comment on the implementation of the proposals for inpatient acute assessment considered by HOSC during 2008.**
 - 2. Consider and comment on the development of community services for older people with organic mental health needs.**
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1. Background

1.1 In March 2008 HOSC considered Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation 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 was not appropriate. There were 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 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 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 enabled the County Council's Adult Social Care department to progress the expansion of its facilities at Milton Court but was unrelated to the proposed Beechwood closure. The proposed use of Beechwood to re-house the Milton Court beds was 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.

1.4 HOSC established a Task Group comprising Cllr Healy (Chairman), Cllr Martin and Mr Chapman to examine the proposals in more detail. The Task Group met in April, May and July 2008 to question Trust representatives on the proposals, review consultation plans and visit the Beechwood Unit. In September 2008 HOSC endorsed the Task Group's conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations are set out in appendix 1. In summary, the Task Group supported the proposals but made recommendations regarding areas such as travel support, further communication regarding the development of a permanent site in Eastbourne and the need for continued development of community assessment and support.

1.5 HOSC also agreed, given that some concerns were raised about the changes to inpatient beds and that there was a need to ensure continued investment in community services, that the committee should review progress on services for older people with organic mental health needs in 12 months time. This report provides the requested update.

2. Progress update

2.1 Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, in conjunction with NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald/NHS Hastings and Rother, have provided an update on the implementation of the proposals for inpatient acute assessment beds considered by the HOSC Task Group and the development of community services (attached at appendix 2).

2.2 Neil Waterhouse, Service Director Older People's Mental Health Services, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Martin Packwood, Joint Commissioning Manager for Mental Health, NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald/NHS Hastings and Rother will present the update to HOSC and take questions. The presentation slides are attached as appendix 3. The previous agenda item on the broader strategy for older people's mental health and the implications of the national dementia strategy provides useful context for the report on these specific services.

3. Issues to consider

3.1 HOSC may wish to explore the following issues:

- Whether any concerns have been raised by patients or carers in relation to travel and transport arrangements.
- Plans for extending the Memory Assessment and Support Team (MAST) across the county particularly rural areas
- Timescale on refurbishment of Milton Court.

ANDREW OGDEN
Director of Law and Personnel

Contact Officer: Lisa Schrevel, Scrutiny Lead Officer
Tel No: 01273 481327

HOSC Older People's Mental Health Task Group**Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 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.
- 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) Patients requiring admission to inpatient acute assessment beds, and their carers should continue to be supported with advice and assistance with transport, particularly recognising that the consolidation of inpatient beds will mean longer journeys for some patients 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. At the time the Milton Court beds return to Eastbourne and Beechwood Unit closes, there will be a need for further discussion and communication with local stakeholders.