

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

Date: **16th September 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 final 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. Note the Task Group's final response as outlined in appendix 1.**
 - 2. Agree to review progress on community and inpatient care for older people with organic mental health needs in 12 months time.**
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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.

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 and May 2008 to question Trust representatives on the proposals, review consultation plans and visit the Beechwood Unit. In June 2008 HOSC endorsed the Task Group's interim conclusions, and requested that the Group meet again following the close of consultation to review the feedback, ensure issues raised were being considered by the Trust, and to amend or add to the Group's conclusions if required.

2. Task Group activity

2.1 As requested by HOSC, the Task Group met again on 23rd July 2008 in order to review the consultation activity and responses. The Group questioned Sussex Partnership Trust representatives about how they had implemented the consultation plan previously endorsed by the Group. It was noted that it had been necessary to issue an addendum to the consultation document in order to clarify that the beds transferring from Milton Court to Beechwood would be available to residents from across East Sussex, including Wealden, not only those residents falling into the Trust's south-west administrative area. To allow time for the addendum to be circulated the consultation period had been extended by two weeks and closed on 11 August 2008.

2.2 The Task Group reviewed responses to the consultation received up to 23rd July 2008. It was noted that the main issues raised were confusion about access to beds (as clarified by the addendum described above), concerns about travel and transport and questions about the future of the Beechwood Unit, once the Milton Court beds eventually return to Eastbourne. These were issues the Group had raised previously and discussed at length with Trust representatives before coming to their conclusions.

2.3 Having discussed the consultation responses with the Trust, the Task group made some small amendments to their interim conclusions and also agreed some further points. This included the circulation of the final summary of consultation responses to the Task Group after the closing date of 11th August, so that the Group could be aware of any new issues which may have arisen from later responses.

3. Task Group report to HOSC

3.1 The Task Group has now agreed its final conclusions and recommendations which have been communicated to Sussex Partnership Trust and to the East Sussex PCTs as commissioners. These are listed in appendix 1.

3.2 The Task Group has recommended, given that some concerns have been raised about the changes to inpatient beds and that there is a need to ensure continued investment in community services, that HOSC reviews progress on services for older people with organic mental health needs in 12 months time.

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HOSC Older People's Mental Health Task Group

Conclusions and Recommendations

Following a further meeting on 23rd July 2008 the Task group resolved to:

- Note and welcome the addendum and clarification for stakeholders on issued raised during the first part of the consultation.
- Welcome the extension of the consultation period to Monday 11th August 2008 to allow consideration of this addendum.
- Welcome the clarification of travel assistance available for service users and their carers.
- Amend the Task Group's interim recommendation (i), on transport advice and assistance, to reflect the fact that this applies to all patients, not just those affected by the temporary move of Milton Court beds to Uckfield.
- Add to interim recommendation (j), on the return of Milton Court beds to Eastbourne, the need for further discussion and communication with stakeholders when the beds in Uckfield finally close with the establishment of the permanent site in Eastbourne.
- Request an updated version of the consultation responses summary report, together with an executive summary of the key issues raised and the Trust's response to these, from the Sussex Partnership Trust following the close of consultation on 11th August 2008. This to be circulated to the Task Group for their consideration.
- Subject to the amendments noted above, and the updated consultation responses summary not identifying any significant new issues, to endorse the Task Group's interim recommendations as reported to HOSC on 16 June 2008 as the Task Group's final view (on behalf of HOSC) on the proposals.
- To produce a report outlining the Task Group's final view for HOSC on 16 September 2008 for information and to request that HOSC re-visit the topic in September 2009 to assess the impact of the implementation of the proposals and to see how plans for the permanent site for organic conditions assessment beds in Eastbourne have progressed.

The Task Group's updated conclusions and recommendations, amended as noted above, are therefore as follows:

- 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.