

East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Meeting on 3rd December 2015

Progress report on the reconfiguration of NHS dementia assessment beds in East Sussex.

Introduction and Background

Members will recall that a HOSC Task Group was set up to review proposals for reconfiguring NHS beds for people with dementia, and that its Report, conclusions and recommendations were subsequently approved by the full HOSC in November 2013.

The conclusions and recommendations of the HOSC Task Group were that:

1. There appears to be a sound rationale for reducing the number of dementia assessment beds currently located at the Beechwood ward in Uckfield Community Hospital and at the St Gabriel's ward in the St Anne's Centre at the Conquest Hospital in Hastings
2. There appears to be a sound rationale for locating the dementia beds at a single site. However, any reconfiguration to a single site should not be undertaken before a suitable site has been identified with appropriate physical surroundings, facilities and levels of care for patients
3. Consideration should be given, where practicable to locating the single site near to an acute hospital so that the multiple health needs of this group of patients can be better handled
4. The innovative ideas emerging around alternative models of support (including step-down facilities), need further development and must be in place before the reconfiguration can be undertaken.

These conclusions and recommendations were made available and taken in to account when Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Governing Bodies agreed in December 2013 to pursue "a wholly new model of bed based dementia services."

This decision was taken in the context of NHS dementia beds being under-occupied on two sites, and opportunities to consolidate on a single site with reinvestments in a new and wider range of community-based 'urgent care' services, aimed at providing alternatives to admission.

In parallel with meetings of a stakeholder reference group, a clinically led Working Group was established and met between April and June 2014 to develop the new service model and options for delivery.

Drawing from the conclusions of this work a Business Case was produced in early August which set out how by investing more in community services, bed numbers could be reduced to below prevailing levels of occupancy. It also contained an option appraisal which concluded the preferred site for such beds should be St Gabriel's ward on the Conquest Hospital site in Hastings.

Members will recall from earlier HOSC briefings that formal agreement to reducing bed numbers below prevailing occupancy levels, as well as negotiating to final resolution all financial aspects of the proposed reconfiguration, delayed the Business Case being considered until these matters were finally resolved in March 2015.

Members may also recall, that due to the capital costs to be met by Sussex Partnership Trust (SPFT) in establishing a new centre of excellence for in-patient dementia care, and residual concerns about the strength of evidence for the preferred site option, it was subsequently decided to conduct an additional and more inclusive option appraisal to determine its location.

This was carried out between May and June and outcomes were incorporated in to an updated and revised Business Case, which was originally intended for consideration by CCG Governing Bodies in July. In the event this was deferred until September 2015 to allow for CCG members to be briefed on the background to the recommendations being made.

The Reconfiguration of NHS Dementia Beds

The recommendations supported by CCG Governing Bodies are set out below:

- NHS Dementia Beds / Intensive Care Unit (DICU) Beds should be provided by Sussex Partnership Foundation NHS Trust at St Gabriel's ward on the Conquest Hospital site, following its refurbishment to create a purpose built environment more fit for purpose to provide modern dementia care;
- Investments should be made in a new and wider range of community-based 'urgent care' services aimed at providing alternatives to admission, thereby reducing the number of DICU beds required to be initially commissioned at St Gabriel's ward;
- Dementia (DICU) beds should be temporarily located at Beechwood ward in Uckfield in numbers equivalent to current occupancy levels, whilst refurbishment works are carried out to St Gabriel's ward.

The decision to locate DICU beds in the long-term at St Gabriel's ward was based on conclusions from an inclusive Option Appraisal process involving Trust and CCG clinicians and commissioners, as well as external stakeholders including Health-Watch and Care for the Carers.

Locating these beds on the Conquest Hospital site in Hastings fulfils one of the recommendations also supported by the HOSC, and the inclusive process undertaken to identify this as the preferred option, provides assurance that this is the most suitable site from which to deliver appropriate physical surroundings, facilities and levels of care for patients.

An interim move of bed-based services to Beechwood ward in Uckfield in numbers equivalent to current occupancy levels, allows for step-down facilities to be piloted without presumptions about their impact on reducing admissions or lengths of stay. It has also been agreed that a new dementia crisis team will be funded by CCGs well in advance of moving services to their long-term location in St Gabriel's ward.

In these ways the recommendation of the HOSC Task Group that alternative models of support need further development and must be in place before the reconfiguration takes place, will be fulfilled.

Timescales and Transitional Arrangements

New admissions to St Gabriel's ward will stop in December, from when these will all be made to Beechwood ward. Staff will transfer incrementally based on the clinical needs of patients on both wards.

This transitional process is in line with best practice and means no patients will have to be physically transferred between wards.

Beechwood ward has been refurbished to accommodate up to twenty people with dementia, and the staff skill-mix will be enhanced to ensure their needs are met effectively.

The physical environment enables patients with different degrees of behavioural disturbance to be managed separately, and clear arrangements are in place to manage gender separation.

Feasibility studies already carried out by the Trust for the refurbishment of St Gabriel's ward are now being developed into more detailed designs and specifications.

Refurbishment works will be extensive and require significant capital investment by SPFT.

For these reasons, it is anticipated by the Trust that taking in to account all the stages involved, from finalisation of plans, formal Board approval, tendering for and the undertaking of works, the new Dementia Intensive Care Unit on the Conquest Hospital site will be approximately two years from now.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- Note the final set of proposals for the reconfiguration of NHS dementia beds supported by CCG Governing Bodies at their meetings in September 2015;
- Note the transitional arrangements being put in place to ensure continuity in the provision of high quality care.