

Please contact: Michael Turner (01634 332817)

Our ref:

Date: 3 November 2021

Mr Wilf Williams
Accountable Officer, Kent and Medway
Clinical Commissioning Group
(by email)



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Dear Mr Williams

Transforming Mental Health Services in Kent and Medway - Eradicating Dormitory Wards - Comments and recommendations from the Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committee

I refer to your letter dated 2 August 2021 to Councillor Wildey asking the Committee to confirm its response to the proposal to relocate Ruby Ward from Medway Maritime Hospital to a new purpose-built unit at KMPT's Hermitage Lane site in Maidstone by Monday 1 November 2021 (subsequently changed to 8 November). I am writing to advise you of the Committee's formal response to this proposal in accordance with Regulation 23 (1) of The Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.

The Committee met on 26 October 2021 to consider the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal and agreed to submit the following comments and recommendations to the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group.

Comments

The Committee:

- a) Welcomes the eradication of the last dormitory ward for mental health patients in Kent and Medway and also the £12.65m allocation to KMPT by the Government to allow a new facility to be built.
- b) Deeply regrets that a site could not be found in Medway which met the agreed criteria.
- c) Regrets that this proposal represents another service moving out of Medway, particularly as the highest proportion of admissions to Ruby Ward between 2016/17 – 2019/20 were from Medway and Swale.
- d) Considers that earlier engagement with scrutiny may have led to a site being identified in Medway.

{It is acknowledged that the CCG, KMPT and MFT met with the Council in 2020, prior to engagement with the Committee, to attempt to find an alternative site in Medway. The first report to the Committee on this matter was in March 2021 when Members were asked to decide whether the reprovision of services from Ruby ward at Medway Maritime Hospital to the Maidstone Hospital site was considered to be a substantial variation to services and were also advised of various sites in Medway which had been identified as a result of the earlier discussions with the Council referred to. However, none of these sites met the agreed criteria.

In addition, HASC members made some suggestions for possible alternative sites that were fully evaluated in Spring 2021 and discussed as part of a small sub working group comprising Medway HASC members and NHS officials. This process is outlined in earlier papers to HASC and the NHS's pre-consultation business case for the proposed changes to Ruby Ward.

The agreed protocol between the Committee and NHS bodies in the case of substantial variation of health services says: *"The NHS body will discuss any proposals for service change with the relevant OSC committee at an early stage as part of the Committee's work programming process in order to agree whether or not the proposal is substantial and at this point there will be discussion about how consultation with the OSC will be undertaken."*

- e) Welcomes the fact that the proposal was the subject of a formal public consultation, reflecting the wishes of the Committee and that this was more appropriate than the limited public engagement initially recommended by the CCG.
- f) Expresses its disappointment that the public were consulted on a single option proposal and that this was phrased in terms of it being a relocation and not the closure of a service in Medway.

Recommendations

- a) That the alternative sites in Medway identified in the public consultation that have not already been assessed against the criteria (i.e., Gillingham Business Park, Chatham Dockside and Medway Campus), are assessed as a matter of urgency and this is included in the decision-making business case to be presented to Kent and Medway CCG Governing Body in November 2021.
- b) The outcome of this evaluation of potential alternative sites is reported to Members via a briefing note for information.
- c) That service users and their families and carers are involved in the more detailed design process, including ensuring that the new site has a range of

digital communications available to enable patients to contact their families and carers.

- d) That a travel and transport strategy is produced during the planning process that addresses the travel and access needs of patients, staff, families and carers and that a report on the take up and effectiveness of this strategy be submitted to the Committee within 6 months of the new facility opening.
- e) That clarity is provided about the implementation process, especially around the relocation of patients and staff including how patients who may be initially admitted to MFT in crisis after the service has moved from Ruby ward will be assessed and transferred.
- f) That, for similar proposals in the future, the CCG (or successor organisation) works with the Committee to ensure, in line with Government Guidance on Local Authority Health Scrutiny, that there is constructive dialogue with health scrutiny when communicating on timescales for comments or decisions in relation to substantial developments or variations in order to help ensure that timescales are realistic and achievable.
- g) That where in future the requirement to consult the Committee on a substantial variation to a health service is triggered, public consultation should then be seen as the default position and a decision on this, and the appropriate timescales, should be made alongside the Committee.

As you will be aware, the above-mentioned Regulations require the CCG to notify the Committee if it disagrees with any of the recommendations. If that were to be the case then both parties have to try, as far as is reasonably practicable, to try to reach agreement in relation to the subject of the recommendation.

I would like to thank your colleagues at the CCG and KMPT for their co-operation and assistance with this issue over the last few months.

Yours sincerely

Michael Turner

Principal Democratic Services Officer

Cc:

Caroline Selkirk, Executive Director for Health Improvement/ Chief Operating Officer Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group

Karen Benbow, Director of System Commissioning, Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group

Helen Greatorex, Chief Executive, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust

Vincent Badu, Deputy Chief Executive/ Executive Director Partnerships & Strategy, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust