

**NHS CONSULTATION – PROPOSED REDESIGN OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
ACROSS CAMBRIDESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH
(Report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the Panel's last meeting, Members gave consideration to the content of NHS Cambridgeshire's current consultation on the Proposed Redesign of Mental Health Services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 1.2 In light of the fact that the consultation closes on 16th January 2012, it was agreed to defer finalising the Panel's response to its January 2012 meeting. Members requested a representative of NHS Cambridgeshire to be in attendance at the meeting and an invitation has since been extended to that organisation.
- 1.3 In addition, the Panel was keen to ensure that an informed response to the consultation was submitted and requested the views of service users to be sought on the proposals. Members recalled that letters in the press had appeared in the local paper and requested Officers to make contact with those individuals to enquire whether they would be able to assist the Panel with its investigations. In addition, a press release was issued on 12th December 2011. Enquiries were also made by Councillor Mrs J A Dew, on behalf of the Panel, to gain the views of a service user. All views obtained will be conveyed to the Panel at its meeting.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report therefore is to remind Members of the preliminary views expressed by the Panel at its December 2011 meeting.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the Panel's December 2011 meeting, Councillor R J West delivered a brief update on the work of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been established to respond to the consultation proposals. Their view was that the proposals had been designed to generate efficiencies within the existing service, ensure effective use of NHS finances and to improve access to services. However, some concerns existed amongst the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the absence of medical aims from the proposals, the travel and support arrangements available to patients and their visitors, admission thresholds to the proposed mental health facilities and staffing levels on acute wards. The Committee has since met on 19th December 2011, when consideration was given to a number of other matters together with their final response to the consultation.

3. PRELIMINARY VIEWS

- 3.1 Acer Ward at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital was temporarily closed following a review by the National Clinical Advisory Team on 2nd September 2011 which concluded that staff shortages presented serious clinical risk. The facility has been closed to new admissions since 8th September 2011 pending the outcome of the current consultation. A briefing note to this effect has been circulated around electronically to Panel Members for background purposes.

- 3.2 Members of the Panel expressed strong concerns over the proposed loss of a local facility within Huntingdonshire. The Panel commented on the risks associated with the Care in the Community approach suggested by NHS Cambridgeshire given that it is reliant on patients taking their medication. This concern might have greater currency if the changes result in patients who have more severe conditions being cared for in this way rather than in wards as was previously the case. Members also questioned the adequacy of the transportation system to Peterborough for relatives and friends. This might deter potential patients from self admitting themselves to hospital.
- 3.3 In terms of the proposals to establish a new 24/7 Advice and Brief Intervention Centre, the Panel commented that this could lead to flawed diagnosis given that patients would not be receiving a face to face service. In addition, Members formed the view that the Centre could act as a potential barrier to acute services for those in urgent need of care.
- 3.4 A Member stated that Acer Ward had not been open for long and the Ward was already designated as a purpose built facility for mental health patients. It was suggested that the existing facility could be modernised to meet the accommodation standards now required.
- 3.5 The Panel received details of the experiences of Members whose friends and families have utilised the mental health service. The request for additional service users' views arose from the Panel's discussions in this respect.
- 3.6 Finally, the Panel drew attention to the ongoing trend for local NHS facilities to be transferred from Huntingdonshire to Cambridge and Peterborough.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Panel has already made a series of comments on NHS Cambridgeshire's current consultation on the Proposed Redesign of Mental Health Services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Panel expressed a wish to ensure that an informed response to the consultation was submitted and in that light, representatives of NHS Cambridgeshire have been invited to attend the Panel's meeting with service users. Any other views received will be conveyed to Members at the meeting.
- 4.2 The Panel is requested to endorse the preliminary views as outlined in section 3 of the report above and to consider whether it wishes to make any further comments on the consultation for submission to NHS Cambridgeshire by 16th January 2012.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report and Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) meeting held on 6th December 2011.

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