

The future of mental health inpatient services for east Berkshire

Results of additional engagement work undertaken by NHS Berkshire July-December 2011

The key outcomes are as follows:

- 1. It was clear that not all stakeholders had a clear idea of the nature of inpatient treatment for mental health problems or how many people might need it, in relation to the numbers of people who receive their treatment and support in the community.**

In response to this, there were detailed discussions between clinicians (consultant psychiatrists, specialist nurses and GPs) and a number of stakeholders (clinical commissioners, council representatives and Local Involvement Network – LINK – representatives).

Approximately 2-3% of people receiving mental health services need to be admitted to hospital, with the vast majority receiving support and treatment while living in their own home. When people need inpatient admission, it is for specialist treatment and care, best provided in a purpose-built environment.

As a result of these discussions there was increased support for providing all inpatient services on one site, in a good quality environment, to achieve the best outcomes for patients, while also investing in community services.

- 2. Concerns were expressed about access to inpatient services for people from east Berkshire if these were to be located in Reading at Prospect Park Hospital – as described in option 1 in the 2010 consultation by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT).**

In response, further detail about transport support was provided. BHFT is committed to providing £100,000 annually to support this.

As a result some stakeholders have been reassured around transport issues. However, it is recognised that some people remain extremely concerned about this. Access to visitors is a very important part of recovery for patients. That is why the GP-led Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in east Berkshire have cited establishing support arrangements as a condition of approval of any move of inpatient services from east Berkshire. This is one of the recommendations to the Board of NHS Berkshire.

- 3. It was not clear to some stakeholders that all options for future provision of services had been considered.**

NHS Berkshire asked Berkshire Shared Services (BSS) to look at the use of existing NHS sites in east Berkshire, to ensure that all options had been considered. BSS has worked with Slough CCG to look at the feasibility of providing a specialist unit in Slough for people requiring mental health inpatient services. The CCG also asked BHFT to consider whether a “hub and spoke” style of service could be provided. Slough LINK also brought together a group of stakeholders which produced some proposals for consideration.

Despite a great deal of additional work to look at potential alternatives to the three options on which consultation was carried out in 2010, no new clinically or financially viable options were identified. However, these discussions have been useful in deepening understanding of stakeholder concerns, financial and estates issues and the rationale for clinicians' views about service models.

4. Some stakeholders felt that a decision to move all inpatient services to Prospect Park Hospital in Reading had already been made on financial grounds.

Presenting information about the financial position to stakeholders was an important part of the engagement work. People appreciated the opportunity to have further discussions about the financial issues, and the difficulty of making decisions about priorities for funding. They understood that investing in new buildings would significantly reduce the amount available for community services. BHFT is already making savings to achieve a balanced budget and would need to make even more to fund a new building. A new building would take up more than half of the BHFT community mental health budget in any one of the east Berkshire council areas.

5. People were concerned about the experience of patients and their families, and wanted to be sure that planning was taking this into account.

This was a particularly important point for some east Berkshire GPs. Work will continue to ensure that patient experience is considered and used to inform future work. In addition, NHS Berkshire will ensure that patients' views are independently surveyed. The PCT will also work with BHFT to continue to improve service quality.

6. Some people were concerned that plans were not in the best interests of patients, and their health might be adversely affected by moving inpatient services further away.

It was helpful for people to have the opportunity to talk directly to specialist doctors and nurses who are responsible for providing mental health inpatient care – and to hear from them that they are unanimous in their belief that moving all inpatient services to Prospect Park Hospital will produce the best clinical outcomes for patients. In other specialist areas as well as mental health, improvements in the way healthcare is provided in the community is resulting in regional specialist units being established alongside more treatment at home.

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