

Councillor Warwick Payne
C/O Mark Pirnie, Democratic Services
Southampton City Council
Civic Centre
Southampton
SO14 7LY



Direct dial: 023 8083 3886
Email: mark.pirnie@southampton.gov.uk

Date: 27 October 2023

Ron Shields
Chief Executive
Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

Email sent to: ron.shields@southernhealth.nhs.uk

Dear Ron,

Proposals to redesign inpatient Older Persons Mental Health (OPMH) Services

The Southampton Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel welcomes the opportunity to formally respond to the proposals to redesign inpatient OPMH services, particularly those relating to Western Community Hospital in Southampton.

At the June and October meetings in which the proposals have been considered, the Panel have expressed concerns about the loss of the organic dementia ward from the city, recognising the value of the amenity and the expected increase in demand for dementia services moving forward.

The Panel recognises that the service is specialist and operates on a wider footprint than just a city-level and that Southern Health needs to ensure that the most appropriate inpatient older people's mental health services are provided to support the whole population of Hampshire.

We are encouraged by the planned upgrade of the facilities at Western Community Hospital to meet the needs of older people with a functional illness. This will better support patients with these needs for which we understand there is greater demand within the city.

The Panel also understands that, due to the recent refurbishment of organic dementia wards at both Parklands Hospital in Basingstoke and Gosport War Memorial Hospital, Southampton residents with organic mental health needs requiring an inpatient stay could receive an improved experience from that currently offered within Beaulieu Ward if the proposals are implemented.

You will understand that we have significant concerns about the distance from Southampton of these two units, and the logistical problems that would be faced by patients and their loved ones in accessing services that are a long way from home, especially if dependent on public transport, for example the fact that Gosport has no railway station.

The Panel welcomes the transport support committed to by Southern Health at the October meeting, whereby Southampton residents who have caring responsibilities for a patient who has been admitted to either Parklands Hospital or Gosport War Memorial Hospital's dementia inpatient wards will be entitled to support, on a case-by-case basis, tailored to their needs. However, it is important to stress that the Panel feels it is vital this support continues for as long as in-patient services of this type are not provided in Southampton. If the support were to be withdrawn, the Panel would be obliged to scrutinise such a move, given its impact in the city, requiring the matter to come back for a further hearing.

PTO

You will also recall our concerns that based on predicted growth in dementia prevalence across Hampshire, it is possible that demand for inpatient organic dementia beds will exceed capacity in the future if only two wards are available. If that scenario materialises, and an additional ward is required, the Panel fully expects the Trust, or its successor, to provide the additional ward within Southampton, which would be particularly beneficial in providing closer services for patients in the city, along with those in Eastleigh, the New Forest, and the southern parishes of Winchester and the Test Valley.

I would like to express thanks for your attendance at the meetings to discuss the proposals and the additional engagement that was undertaken at our request. It has addressed some of our concerns and the Panel does not intend to scrutinise the proposals any further at this stage, but we may choose to review the implementation and the impact of the proposals at a future meeting, especially if the transport support which has been promised does not prove to meet the expectations and needs of patients and their loved ones.

In conclusion, we are happy to keep working with the Trust to ensure steps are being taken to improve outcomes along with the patient experience and quality of services. I believe we share a combined goal to ensure Southampton residents receive the best care possible, and we want to be part of that journey with you going forward.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Payne', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Cllr Warwick Payne
Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Southampton City Council