

Councillor Reg Rice  
Chair  
Haringey Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Haringey Council

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***By e-mail only***

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Dear Councillor Rice

### **Downhills Ward at St Ann's**

I am writing to update you on the position of Downhills Ward at St Ann's Hospital as there has been some concern about our processes. As you may know, a decision was taken by the Crisis and Emergency Service Line within the Trust to close the ward on 20 September. Unfortunately, this decision was made at very short notice, without properly discussing this in advance with patients, carers and staff. This is highly regrettable and the Trust is currently reviewing how this occurred in this way. This change did not follow our policies around proper engagement with patients, carers, staff and wider stakeholders and for that I apologise profusely.

We recognise that this incident caused a great deal of unnecessary distress to patients on the ward and their carers, which was avoidable, had proper notice been given and the change implemented in a planned way. We have apologised to the patients concerned and their carers. I have personally met a number of patients and carers to apologise and explain that this change was not managed as well as it should have been.

At present, Downhills Ward remains open and there are currently six patients on the ward. We have given a commitment that it will remain open until all the existing patients have completed their current episode of care. We are making sure that all those patients affected by this incident are being properly supported and helped to recover as quickly as possible.

As we have discussed with the OSC on a number of occasions over recent years, the Trust has a clear long term strategy to develop a greater range of more appropriate alternatives to inpatient mental health care, in line with national policy and best clinical practice. Over the last few years, we have strengthened our Home Treatment Teams, giving greater choice to patients and promoting their recovery through allowing more patients to be supported at home, rather than needing to be admitted to an inpatient ward.

Over the last year, we have also opened three new mental health Recovery Houses, one in each of the boroughs we serve to provide better care environments for our patients. These are run in partnership with the mental health charity 'Rethink' and have proved very popular with patients, as they provide a more homely alternative to an inpatient ward, allowing patients to stay closer to their homes and families, and return home as quickly as possible.

As a result of these developments, the Trust has been using fewer and fewer inpatient beds, as more and better alternatives are introduced. We regularly review the numbers of

beds in use and, since July, there have been over 20 mental health beds vacant across the Trust's inpatient units. This is neither clinically safe nor a good use of public funds. The Trust has therefore been reviewing the best way of consolidating our existing inpatient beds, to ensure the continued clinical safety of all inpatients and to make the best use of our financial and staffing resources. The Trust monitors the availability of inpatient beds twice daily and has the flexibility to ensure that there are always beds available to meet clinical needs.

The decision to close Downhills Ward was taken in response to the reduced demand for beds following the opening of the three Recovery Houses, which have been successfully operating for many months. Downhills Ward is the poorest quality environment for our patients of any of our current inpatient wards. As you know, the Trust has given a formal commitment to retain a full range of inpatient mental health services at St Ann's Hospital in the long term and we are developing plans to build new, modern mental health facilities at St Ann's as quickly as possible which meet all the latest care standards, which the current wards at St Ann's do not.

Once the current patients on Downhills Ward have finished their current episode of care and have been discharged home or to other clinical settings, the ward will formally close. Following the closure of Downhills Ward, two acute adult mental health wards will remain open at St Ann's. Both of these will remain open until they are replaced by new facilities as part of the redevelopment of St Ann's, due to commence in autumn 2013. The two remaining wards are:

- Haringey Ward – 18 bedded admissions and assessment ward. This can accommodate both male and female patients who need admission to an inpatient ward for an initial assessment. Patients remain on the ward for up to seven days. Many patients do not need to remain in an inpatient setting for longer than this and are discharged home or to other settings, supported by the appropriate community or home treatment team. For those patients who need a longer stay on an inpatient ward for treatment purposes, they are then transferred to another ward.
- Finsbury Ward – 12 bedded acute adult ward. This is where patients requiring longer stay therapeutic inpatient care in Haringey are cared for, most being transferred from the admissions ward. Finsbury Ward can only accommodate male patients, as it does not have appropriate facilities for mixing male and female patients, unlike Haringey Ward.

Following the closure of Downhills Ward, both male and female patients will continue to be admitted to Haringey Ward for initial assessment. Many will then be discharged back home or into other community settings. Those male patients who need a longer stay in an inpatient setting will be admitted onto Finsbury Ward. However, female patients from Haringey Ward who require a longer stay in an inpatient setting cannot be accommodated in Finsbury Ward and will be transferred to dedicated female inpatient facilities at Chase Farm Hospital in Enfield.

This position will only exist for a relatively short period of time, as Haringey and Finsbury Wards will be reprovided in new build facilities at St Ann's, as part of the overall redevelopment of the site. The new mental health inpatient facilities at St Ann's will be able to accommodate both male and female patients as they will have individual rooms with en suite facilities etc. The new facilities will be designed to meet all the latest care standards, which the current wards fall far short of.

The Trust recognises that this may cause genuine difficulties for some carers and other visitors of the small number of female patients from Haringey who will be placed on a female ward at Chase Farm Hospital. However, these patients will have much better facilities at Chase Farm Hospital, which has newly refurbished wards with en suite rooms and a generally much more modern care environment than is currently possible at St Ann's. The numbers of these patients is also very small, as very few patients require an extended stay on an inpatient ward.

The Trust is actively looking at ways of supporting carers, relatives, friends and others who may be inconvenienced by this short term change until the much improved new facilities at St Ann's are available.

I hope my letter has explained the latest position around Downhills Ward and reassured you that the ward will remain open until all the existing patients have completed their current episode of care. I would like to emphasise again that the recent incident is highly regrettable and we have apologised to the patients affected and their carers for this. We are reviewing how this situation occurred and why proper notice and engagement of those potentially affected was not given as it should have been.

I would like to assure the Committee that this incident does not affect our ongoing plans to redevelop St Ann's and provide significantly improved facilities to serve the population of Haringey in the future. We look forward to continuing our constructive relationship with the OSC around this and other important issues.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Kane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Maria Kane  
Chief Executive

CC: Councillor David Winskill – Vice Chair, Haringey OSC  
Rob Mack – Senior Policy Officer, LBH – to distribute to other OSC members  
Lisa Redfern – Deputy Director, Adult and Community Services, LBH