

Councillor Helena Hart
Cabinet Member for Public Health
London Borough of Barnet

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13 December 2013

Dear Cllr Hart

I am writing in response to your letter of 6 December 2013, which my office received on 11 December. Your letter raised concerns following the recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) report about the Trust's older people's mental health services based on the Chase Farm Hospital site in Enfield.

I wanted to write to provide assurance on the steps that are being taken to address the issues raised by the CQC. However, I also felt it important to write to express my concern about aspects of your letter, which I am sorry to say I found inaccurate and unhelpful.

As you know, the CQC visited our older people's mental health services based on the Chase Farm Hospital site and identified a number of issues that need to be addressed. I can personally assure you that the Trust Board is very sighted on these issues and is taking them very seriously. An action plan has been developed, which has been shared with our local Clinical Commissioning Groups and the NHS Trust Development Authority in London. There is absolutely no complacency about any of the issues the CQC have raised; they are being addressed at high level by the Trust's Medical Director and Director of Nursing, Quality and Governance.

It is very important however, to understand this report in context. Your letter has been selective in the issues it focused on and, frankly, portrays an inaccurate view of these key services. In particular, it is very inappropriate to compare our services for older people with the situation at Winterbourne View. I find the comparison of our older people's services with the situation at Winterbourne View completely unacceptable. The CQC's report raises a number of important issues, which are being addressed, however, it does not portray "serious failings in the decency of care" or anything approaching this.

Rather than responding in detail to your points in writing, I think it would be beneficial to arrange to meet face to face, along with my Chief Executive, Medical Director and Director of Nursing, Quality and Governance, so that we can explain the nature of the services being referred to, set out the context of the comments made in the CQC report and detail the actions underway to address the issues identified by the CQC. I am very keen to do this as a matter of urgency, as I feel that your letter has inaccurately portrayed the current situation and raised anxieties about these services which are not warranted.

I will also be forwarding a copy of your letter to the CQC as I am sure that they will be concerned that the measured and constructive report they produced on these services has been misinterpreted in such an unhelpful way and has been publicised widely without understanding the detailed context and the actions the Trust already has underway.

My office will be in contact with your office very soon to arrange a meeting as quickly as possible. I want to ensure that you are appropriately briefed and understand the actual situation so that patients, carers, the public, commissioners and other stakeholders are not inappropriately misinformed about these services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Fox', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael Fox
Chairman

CC:

Dr Alpesh Patel – Chair, Enfield CCG

Dr Debbie Frost – Chair, Barnet CCG

Dr Anne Rainsberry – Regional Director (London), NHS England

Cllr Richard Cornelius – Leader, London Borough of Barnet

Cllr Doug Taylor – Leader, London Borough of Enfield

Cllr Claire Kober – Leader, London Borough of Haringey