

Mental Health

Head of Service: Tim Capper
Report Author: Neil White

Recommendation: that Councillors C Whiteside and Mrs Y R T Clarkson as well as the Council's representative Councillor G Garrity attend the Cumbria County Council's special meeting on Mental Health Services.

1. BACKGROUND

At the last meeting on 7 June 2007 Councillor Whiteside expressed concern that there had been little public scrutiny of the outcomes of the decision to close mental health wards in Whitehaven by the North Cumbria NHS Trust.

The Committee agreed that a review of this issue should be scoped out.

2. ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

County Council

Following consultation with Cumbria County Council, the County Council has advised that this issue refers to the closure of Windermere Ward, a mental health ward for older people, and the transfer of the service to Yewdale Ward, which is now a facility providing acute assessment and treatment for "low risk" patients, both of working age and older people. The change took place after the establishment in West Cumbria of a community-based 24-hour crisis resolution and home treatment team, which has reduced hospital admissions for adults.

The County Council's Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee was consulted on the NHS strategy for changes to mental health services in late 2003, and asked for some modifications to the original proposals which were agreed to. Since then that Committee has been regularly monitoring implementation. This has included the NHS Trust responsible for the services (now called the Partnership Trust) reporting to the Committee at 6-monthly intervals since. One of the County Councillors has also been attending meetings of their project board as an observer.

The changes to mental health wards in West Cumbria have been discussed with the Committee in advance of the changes taking place, and (at least to date) the Committee has supported the changes being

made. There have however been concerns brought to the Committee's attention over how the changes are being implemented, including concerns about staffing shortages due to vacancies.

Because of these concerns, in January 2007 two members of the Committee visited Yewdale Ward and met nursing staff, and were generally happy with what they saw. One of them was Anne Bradshaw, Copeland's representative on the Committee.

At the Committee meeting in April, the Patient and Public Involvement Forum for mental health brought to the Committee a letter expressing further concerns about Yewdale Ward. In the light of this, the Cumbria Primary Care Trust is working with the Partnership Trust on a written response to the points raised, and will be meeting the Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee at a special meeting at the end of August.

Copeland

As this issue has been receiving considerable scrutiny from the County Council over some time it would seem unnecessary to duplicate this scrutiny.

It is suggested that Copeland Councillors attend the County Council's Special meeting on this matter and the Chairman of that Committee be asked if it would be permissible to ask questions.

It is recommended that Councillor Whiteside, as the member who raised this question and the Chair of the Committee Councillor Mrs Y R T Clarkson go along with the Council's representative, Councillor G Garrity to represent Copeland at the County Council's Special meeting.

3. CONCLUSION

The Committee is requested to approve the recommendations at the head of the report to enable Copeland's views to be made at the County Council's Special meeting into mental health issues.

List of Appendices

None

List of Background Documents:

None