

Further comments on proposed move of wards from Lambeth Hospital to Maudsley site: comments provided on 21 May ahead of JHOSC, May 2020

Healthwatch Southwark are primarily keen to hear more detail about the patient engagement which has taken place in the difficult circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic. We appreciate the efforts as described by the engagement teams – indeed we face similar constraints. However, we urge strong attention to the reach of the consultation and then genuine consideration of whether a decision should be delayed until face-to-face engagement is possible. Of course this would need to be balanced with the urgency of improving services.

We would like to hear in particular how many Southwark residents have shared their views via both online and offline methods, and which voluntary sector organisations have been involved during the process. Some of the consultation documents may initially appear irrelevant to Southwark residents due to the messaging around ‘improving inpatient mental health services for Lambeth.’ We note that engagement took place before the formal consultation too, but this may have targeted primarily Lambeth residents. There are also potential equalities implications when engagement is primarily online, although we commend the involvement of Lambeth Black Thrive.

Healthwatch Southwark have not undertaken independent engagement on this topic due to risk of duplication, and lack of capacity for work outside our priority areas even before the pandemic. We have promoted the consultation on our ebulletin and website, and a staff member attended a very informative presentation about plans given to the online Mental Health Carers’ Forum.

Based on our own understanding of local issues and the likely concerns of residents, including very brief discussion at a mental health event shortly before lockdown, we would like to raise some points for discussion, from an entirely Southwark-focused perspective. Please note that some were raised in our submission to the previous JHOSC and were to receive a response from Lambeth CCG/SLaM. We received information from SLaM about out-of-area Southwark patients and had a very useful discussion with SLaM partners at a recent liaison meeting, but have not yet heard more detail on some topics.

Bed provision

Benefits for Southwark residents of the proposed changes might include no longer having a small number of patients in hospital in Lambeth when no Southwark beds are available. We are told this applied to 33 Southwark patients between March 2019 and January 2020. These patients could now be treated closer to home, and in better facilities, closer to King’s College Hospital. (We note that no additional pressure on KCH services is expected). We do not know whether Southwark patients are currently treated in the Bethlem eating disorder and neuropsychiatry wards which will also be relocated to Douglas Bennett House.

Maudsley site regeneration and pressures

A key potential concern from a Southwark perspective is that future use of the Maudsley site for the benefit of Southwark patients will be constrained by the development. Whilst Douglas Bennett House is currently not in a fit state for use, we have concerns about the long-term implications,

despite a general direction of travel towards outpatient treatment. Further land at the site will be taken up by the proposed national specialist centre for children and young people.

There may also be additional pressure on visitor/catering facilities and car parking for staff and visitors at the Maudsley, given the additional 107 beds – recognising that a small number of these will be used for Southwark patients.

We agree that regeneration and ‘greening’ of the Maudsley site is overdue. If funds from the sale of the Lambeth site would contribute to this, this is positive. However, we note that the sale of the site is estimated to be worth £38.2m whereas re-provision of the wards will cost £55m – a funding gap of nearly £17m. We request further detail on how this gap will be met and whether it could detract from other improvements across the Trust. We also suggest careful review of the figures in light of the coronavirus pandemic and resulting economic changes.

Workforce

Another key pressure on the local NHS is workforce. From a Southwark perspective, the proposed changes might help alleviate this challenge if the Lambeth site can be used in part for staff accommodation – we strongly encourage further investigation of this possibility.

However, we note that the proposals highlight ‘access on one site to a larger pool of staff reducing the use of bank and agency staff’ and wonder if this could have an unintended consequence of lower staffing overall in places, impacting on Southwark patients too. We would like to know how this can be assured against.

Overall principles

We are aware of local public concern about sale of NHS assets. It is regrettable that in the context of widespread resource constraints across the NHS, SLaM is able to provide high-standard accommodation only through the sale of land.