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Mrs. Kath Foorey-Saunders
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March 29th, 2017

Dear Mrs. Foorey-Saunders,

PROPOSED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR DORSET – RESPONSE BY THE COMMITTEE OF FRIENDS OF YEATMAN HOSPITAL SHERBORNE

Context

1. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposals for mental health services for Dorset, and offer the following as observations after perusal of the consultation documentation and attendance at various presentations.
2. The proposals are comprehensive in their scope but lack both substantive evidence and financial planning follow through. Furthermore, with some 25% of the population expected to have a mental health problem in any year, we question whether the proposals are sufficiently expansive; services may be spread too thinly.

Recovery Beds - (Page 10 para 2 & Page 14)

3. There is a predicted need for an additional 16 beds, however, the proposals focus on a transition from the current system and preventing crisis. If the new proposals are to be effective, the need for beds warrants sustained review without the constraints of arbitrary numbers.

GP Support - (Pages 11 &13)

4. Current system of Community Mental Health Teams offers multi-professional support from specialists in the mental health field. Further justification is invited to substantiate the view that patients could be better supported by their GP, rather than by these specialists. Attention by a GP might be more immediate, but access to specialists should be retained, and such specialists need to be available in sufficient numbers to meet demand.

Community Front Rooms – (Page 13 & Page 17)

5. These are proposed to improve access to support in more rural areas. Either 2 or 3 Front Rooms are proposed for the whole county, which does not suggest very good access potential. The current system of 13 adult and 12 older peoples Community Mental Health Teams appears preferable, albeit with some re-organisation to be able to offer the desirable support during anti-social hours (3pm to 11pm Thursday to Sunday).

6. The proposal to improve the current 24/7-crisis telephone line is applauded; extra staffing at peak hours of need is essential.

Provision of Information

7. At the Drop-in event on 20 Feb, it transpired that the future role/location of the Community Mental Health Teams would not be declared until the feedback about the stated proposals was received, and until the impact of any relocation of service personnel was examined in more detail.

8. It is therefore difficult to comment coherently on the proposals at this stage. Our experience locally indicates that there should be more direct liaison with schools, where resources are being used effectively but are overstretched, and earlier intervention would reduce demands on later adult mental health services.

Finance – (Pages 4 & 7)

9. The document avoids the crucial question of funding. There is no indication of the cost of the proposals. The assertion that ‘all options can be done within existing costs’ does not give confidence that the proposals can match Dorset’s ‘above average need’.

10. The lack of a substantive financial plan erodes the credibility of the overall proposals.

Services in the Community – (Page 13)

11. If Community Mental Health Teams are merged, this would generate the centralisation of services, running contrary to the overarching aim to provide easy access to services i.e. decentralised.

12. We support the ‘hub’ concept in the provision of health services. The Yeatman is ideally placed to be a centre for the provision of such mental health support. Besides owning the expertise there is a whole unoccupied wing - The Stewart Wing – to provide accommodation for Retreats, Community Front Rooms etc.

We hope our observations are helpful, and look forward to contributing to their further development, particularly in determining their financial viability, which currently represents their most critical weakness and undermines their credibility.

Yours faithfully,

David G Hayes CBE
Chairman Friends of the Yeatman Hospital