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Dear Colleague

RE: Changes to Acute Mental Health Services

Further to previous briefings, we are writing to update you about the current review of mental health inpatient services, and the next steps following primary care trust (PCT) board meetings.

You will recall that the proposals to reorganise the county's mental health inpatient services were first outlined in extensive public consultations in 2004 (Lancaster and Morecambe Bay) and 2006 (the rest of Lancashire). The proposed changes included strengthening community-based treatment and support and reducing the number of inpatient facilities to establish a smaller number of purpose-built sites. This was based on evidence that too many people in Lancashire were going into hospital and staying there because there were not enough suitable alternatives in their communities. The care that most people with mental health problems need can be provided very effectively in communities rather than hospital. Not only do many patients prefer to receive support in a community setting, where appropriate, but they have better mental health outcomes when they are supported by services delivered outside of hospital. This is because when people are able to stay in their home environment they maintain contact with their family and friends, have less risk of losing their jobs, and can continue living their normal lives.

Since the 2006 consultation took place, there has been significant investment in community mental health services across the county. As a result of this, more and more people for whom going to hospital was once the only option are being treated effectively in a community setting. This is great news for patients and, as a consequence, demand for inpatient care has fallen significantly. Only around four per cent of people with mental health problems will ever need to use an inpatient unit. This amounted to fewer than 4,000 people in Lancashire last year. This figure is reducing all the time.

In 2010 the proposals arising from the consultation were reviewed to make sure they met the Government's four new tests on service change. These include: support from GP commissioners; strengthened public and patient engagement; clarity on the clinical evidence base; and consistency with patient choice. NHS North West confirmed in December 2010 that the proposals had met these tests. At the same time the National Clinical Advisory Team published an independent report which considered the proposals to be "in line with good clinical practice" and also recommended that fewer mental health inpatient beds were required across Lancashire. A clinical technical appraisal group (TAG), which included local GPs and service users and carers, was then formed to undertake a more detailed evaluation of the proposals. As part of this process Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust submitted a

range of service options for consideration by the TAG. The TAG supported one of the proposals put forward by the trust.

The outcome from the TAG process has now been considered by the PCT boards, who agreed to progress the preferred configuration for future inpatient services as follows:

- A new build at Whyndyke Farm, Blackpool;
- The refurbishment and redesign of the current unit at Royal Blackburn Hospital;
- The continued redevelopment of Pathfinders Drive in Lancaster; and
- A site in central Lancashire (the location is to be determined by further public engagement).

The new model of care will establish a network of service provision which includes specialist community-based services close to people's homes, as well as specialist inpatient services for those who need them. Inpatient beds are very specialist and used by limited numbers of people, and so, like other specialist health services, it is not possible to provide them 'locally' to everyone. The current proposals will ensure that the inpatient capacity is most accessible to the two populations with the highest need: Blackpool and Blackburn. These locations have good access from other parts of Lancashire, including Burnley and Preston. This will ensure that the best balance of high quality care, safety and reasonable access will be available to residents living across the county within the resources available.

In reviewing these proposals, we have had to ensure that they are best value for the tax payer due to the current economic climate. This has meant considering innovative ideas for making the most of current estate, as well as building brand new premises where necessary.

Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust's proposals consider bed numbers at the four sites, with the greatest capacity at Blackpool and Blackburn. While the PCT boards have approved the four-unit configuration (which is in line with the 2006 consultation), the final bed numbers and the details about how community services will effectively support patients through the new model of inpatient care will be agreed as specific site implementation plans are developed with GP consortia and other key stakeholders. The planned phasing of sites over the next five years gives an ongoing and full opportunity to ensure that the required capacity is developed across all proposed sites and that they meet the needs of service users and offer best value.

The proposals considered by the PCT boards also outline centralising dementia beds at Whyndyke Farm. The dementia inpatient beds will be highly specialised and used mainly by patients who are detained under the Mental Health Act. The beds will be used for assessment and treatment only. The majority of patients with dementia can be supported within the community or in settings outside of hospital. Over recent years there has been a continued reduction in hospital admissions through improvements in local community specialist mental health services. Some of the improvements have been focused on early detection of dementia and providing support through intermediate care teams.

A full report will be presented to Lancashire's health overview and scrutiny committees shortly who will then advise what further engagement or consultation with the public and service users and carers needs to take place. We anticipate that we will, at the very least, need to undertake public engagement around the location of the site in Central Lancashire, the site at Blackburn and the location of specialist dementia inpatient services. We will then begin work on a detailed plan which will outline timescales for the work, including public-facing engagement and consultation.

We do hope this update is helpful. If you have any queries, or if you would like a member of the team to attend a future meeting to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Debbie Nixon, Strategic Director for Mental Health, who is leading this piece of work on behalf of the five PCTs. Debbie can be contacted on 01254 282229, or email lancashirementalhealth@bwd.nhs.uk. Copies of papers, correspondence and press releases

can be found on the Lancashire Mental Health and Social Care Partnership website at www.lancashirementalhealth.co.uk.

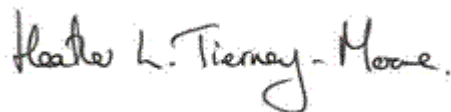
You have our assurance that you will be kept up to date as the programme progresses. We look forward to receiving any comments you may have, and hope that you will take part in the consultation exercise when it begins.

Yours sincerely



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