

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

Subject: Townsend Court
Briefing date: 20 March 2017

Overview

East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) is improving mental health services in Bedfordshire to provide a more therapeutic environment for mental health inpatient recovery. This involves temporarily moving mental health inpatient beds from Weller Wing at Bedford Hospital into Townsend Court in Houghton Regis, until a long term strategy for mental health is developed and implemented by Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

What is happening?

By the end of March, ELFT will transfer female inpatients from the current premises of Keats Ward at Weller Wing to Townsend Court in Houghton Regis. Townsend Court was identified as the most appropriate unit to provide inpatient mental health services, given its design, location and because it had previously provided acute services.

ELFT closed Townsend Court to admissions in January, pending a consultation with staff. Now that the consultation is complete, the plan is to either discharge those patients who have completed their treatment back into the community, or transfer those patients who are still being treated to Fountain Court in Bedford.

Townsend Court currently provides acute care for older people who need support because their symptoms have become more challenging in either their home or care home. Patients receive 24 hour nursing care, with occupational therapy and support to stabilise other physical health issues that can co-exist with dementia, like diabetes.

Older people are currently cared for in three centres across Bedfordshire including Fountain Court in Bedford, Townsend Court in Houghton Regis and The Poplars in Houghton Regis. Patients are allocated beds on availability, rather than location. In these facilities, patients are stabilised, so they can return home when it is safe or appropriate to do so, this would include an assessment to determine if an enhanced care package is required on an individual's return home.

Patients usually stay in Townsend Court for approximately one to three months, although it can occasionally be longer if appropriate facilities for future care need to be identified. The Community Mental Health team liaise with Townsend Court to ensure the correct level of care is provided on discharge, if required. ELFT is also considering a number of additional support measures as part of the service change, including providing an enhanced Matron role to make sure people are discharged appropriately and their care transferred effectively.

There are currently 7 inpatients at Townsend Court and the multi-disciplinary team is reviewing each person to identify those people who are ready for discharge or will be prior to the unit closing and those who will need to continue being treated in an in-patient service and will need to be transferred to Fountains Court in Bedford.

With Townsend Court closing to older people, those who need inpatient beds will be cared for at either The Poplars or at Fountain Court in Bedford. Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group recognises that ELFT need to provide care as locally as possible. Functional older people services will remain in Luton and south Bedfordshire, with dementia inpatient services being provided at Fountain Court.

Why are these changes being made?

This temporary inpatient service change is part of the ongoing improvements, which will lead to a five year strategy to provide modern mental health services across Bedfordshire and strengthen crisis support. Those with an interest in the long term plans for mental health services will have the opportunity to get involved in the process and shape future provision.

Currently, inpatient mental health services are delivered in a number of locations, which include:

27 male beds	Ash Ward, Oakley Court, Luton
9 female beds	Willow Ward, Oakley Court, Luton
17 female beds	Keats Ward, Weller Wing, Bedford
26 beds (mixed for older people)	Fountains Court, Bedford
16 beds (mixed for older people)	Townsend Court, Houghton Regis

In 2013, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) raised concerns that Weller Wing at Bedford Hospital, which provides inpatient care for people in both Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire was not suitable to provide mental health care, because the building was not conducive to recovery. This was strongly supported by the local community and while essential improvements were made to the building – for example, removing the dormitory areas in Keats Ward, (which had also been highlighted as a particular concern by the CQC), it was accepted that services would be moved from Weller Wing, as part of the new contract award to ELFT in 2015.

The work to improve mental health services in Bedfordshire begun in April 2015, opening Oakley Court to reduce the number of people from Bedfordshire who were being placed around the country due to a shortage in beds locally and this continued in Jan 2015, when in line with national best practice, admission of men onto Keats ward ceased and Weller Wing became a female only ward. From this point, men living in Bedford, who required hospital admission went to Oakley Court in Luton, or one of the other Luton based inpatient facilities.

Chaucer Ward, at Weller Wing, an older people's ward was also integrated with Fountains Court, based on the Health Village site in Bedford to provide an improved environment for care delivery which includes ground floor accommodation and safe access to outdoor space.

What facilities are there for older people?

Fountain Court is a 26-bed acute assessment unit for older people with mental illness that provides both treatment for functional illnesses such as depression and specialist dementia care.

It has an experienced and skilled medical and nursing team that provides 24-hour assessment and treatment. There is also a dedicated team of occupational therapists, to assist with the assessment process.

The Poplars in Houghton Regis is a 16 bedded ward for older people who have functional mental illness such as depression or anxiety. A clinical and estate review of this unit was completed as part of this consultation to see if the unit could also provide treatment for older people with dementia but the design of the unit does not support such a model.

Timeline

ELFT started to engage with staff formally about proposed changes to Townsend Court in January. Engagement with patients, their families and carers is currently underway to ensure a smooth transition of patients and services. It is expected that inpatients that cannot be discharged safely into the community will be transferred to Fountain Court in mid-March. ELFT expect to transfer inpatients from Keats Ward at Weller Wing to Townsend Court before end of March, following staff induction to the unit and some minor estates work.

Scale of change

Ensuring quality and patient safety

We recognise that the proposal includes the relocation of vulnerable people from across Central Bedfordshire. ELFT appreciates the importance of providing services locally and is considering a number of steps to minimise the risk, including providing a crisis service to older people and establishing a Matron role to make sure that people are discharged appropriately and their care transferred effectively.

ELFT has established a project group that meets regularly to ensure that the systems are in place to ensure there is minimum disruption to the systems and that there is a safe transfer or discharge of each patient based on individual need

Staffing

ELFT will be working with staff to support them to continue with their existing roles or be supported into alternative positions, if preferred.

Engagement

ELFT has engaged with both patients and public as part of this process. In October 2016, ELFT engaged with patient groups in Bedford Borough to explain the proposal to move patients out of Weller Wing at Bedford Hospital and look for alternative premises.

In January, following an extensive investigation to secure a new facility for mental health care, Townsend Court was identified and a 30-day consultation with staff affected at both Townsend Court and Weller Wing begun on 5 January, 2017. With the decision now made, ELFT is engaging with patients, families and carers to assure them of the quality of care they will continue to receive and visits are being arranged for visits to Fountain Court in Bedford, before the transfer in March.

Next steps

Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and ELFT are committed to keeping Central Bedfordshire Council, its Executives and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee up to date with progress on the five year mental health strategy and the temporary measures that will take place until the strategy is implemented.

Bedfordshire CCG and ELFT have also extended an offer for members of the Central Bedfordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee to visit Townsend Court and Fountain Court before the transfer of patients, so that they can be assured that patient care and experience is at the centre of our plans. Bedfordshire CCG and ELFT will be holding their first engagement with the public regarding the development of long term plans for mental health services for the population of Bedfordshire on 6 March 2017.