

6th July 2018

London Borough of Bromley
Stephen John
Director of Adult Social Care

Princess Royal University Hospital
Farnborough Common
Orpington
Kent
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Sent via email
stephen.john@bromley.gov.uk

Dear Stephen,

Re: Reduction of frailty beds at Orpington Hospital – closure of Elizabeth ward

I am writing to inform you of the decision made by the PRUH and South Sites leadership team of King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to close Elizabeth ward in August. This letter is to explain our decision, but also to assure you of our commitment to working with partners to deliver integrated frailty care in Bromley.

It may be helpful to remind you of the background. As part of Trust-wide capacity planning work in 2016, a decision was taken to open an integrated care unit for frail older people at Orpington Hospital. This unit (which you will know this as Elizabeth and Churchill wards, with a total 38 beds) opened in January 2017. The purpose of the service is to provide short term step down care to frail elderly Bromley patients transferred from the PRUH. We also wanted to provide short term step up care to bridge the gap between home and acute hospital so that patients did not need to be admitted. The unit has very much been about partners working together to improve patient care and experience.

Since we opened the wards the Trust has been placed into financial special measures by the regulator NHS Improvement due to our deficit position. We have been working closely with NHSI to address this and have therefore been reviewing all services. We have identified a number of issues which mean it is not viable to continue delivering the service in the same way. The service is not currently meeting its goals in terms of length of stay, patient case mix and multi-disciplinary staffing. The length of stay has been compounded due to shortage of discharge co-ordinators and social workers, patients waiting for residential placements, home packages of care and lack of available respite beds in the community setting. We have also had challenges with recruitment which has led to overspend on locum doctors; and we've had to use bank and agency nurses to run a seven day service. The ongoing high running costs mean we are struggling to further develop the service and we can't deliver essential savings.

Following this review and discussions with Bromley CCG we have taken the difficult decision to reduce the number of beds on the unit by closing Elizabeth ward (19 beds). We intend to phase the closure of the ward from August 2018. There will be no interruption to the service as Churchill ward will remain open, patients will be cared for here or at the PRUH and there is also no impact to any other Orpington Hospital based services. The staff consultation for those working on the ward was launched recently. Our preferred approach is for staff to move into vacancies elsewhere in the Trust. There are no intentions to place people at risk of redundancy.

It is important to recognise the positive feedback received from patients and their families at the unit and the progress that been made locally such as the introduction of 'discharge to assess care'. We will work with our partners to build on this and find different ways to care for our growing elderly population in Bromley, including consideration of improving care through community models. We want to encourage people to live as well and as independently as possible, avoiding unnecessary hospital admission.

We remain committed to providing high quality care and improving the frailty pathway for Bromley patients. We look forward to continuing our relationship with you as local partners.

If you have any immediate questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Trainer', with a horizontal line above the letters.

Matthew Trainer
Managing Director, PRUH and South Sites