



Education, Care and Health Services
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Mr M Trainer
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13 July 2018

Dear Matthew

Ref: Reduction of frailty beds at Orpington Hospital – closure of Elizabeth Ward

Thank you for your letter dated 6 July 2018 regarding the closure of Elizabeth Ward at Orpington Hospital, the contents of which are duly noted. I do, however, have some concerns, not least, surrounding the reasons for the closure of the ward.

Your letter comments on a shortage of social workers surrounding the service in addition to the shortage of discharge co-ordinators. It is my understanding that there was a FTE SCM in post for nearly two years and that following their departure the post was covered. This FTE had been modelled on the basis of all patients being transferred to Orpington with their discharge pathways completed. In practice this was not the case as the beds were frequently filled with considerably complex cases which generated more than the work of a single SCM. It is my view that had this been managed better there would have been a less detrimental impact on the SCM's workload.

I have concerns that the service wasn't well managed as per the original proposal including step up and day clinics. Regarding the step up to bridge the gap between home and acute hospital admissions not being utilised, how was it proposed to access the geriatrician led care for the frail and elderly other than via A&E? With the closure of Elizabeth Ward I need reassurance of the plans to ensure there is access to specialist care as well as sufficient beds.

Additionally, the bid contained funding for the SCM, however this has never been paid to the Local Authority. Is this funding still with Kings?

I am also apprehensive regarding forward costs; the savings that will be made from the closure of the ward, where will this funding be reinvested in community services? How will patients, previously cared for on Elizabeth ward, be safeguarded in the community without any additional resource coming from Adult Social Care?

What are the plans to manage the closure and ensure care is still provided to those who need it without going via A&E?

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Stephen John
Director Adult Social Care
Education, Care and Health Services