

Text of letter from Mark Hackett to Cllr Barnes Andres dated 22 July 2010

Dear xxxx distribution list to follow

**Re: temporary relocation of neuro-rehabilitation patients for safety reasons**

I am writing to inform you about a decision we have taken to temporarily relocate our neuro-rehabilitation service, which is provided at Victoria House in the grounds of Southampton General Hospital.

On 21 June of this year, we moved six patients who were resident at Victoria House into beds within the main neurosciences department, in a section of Stanley Graveson ward.

This decision was taken because we could no longer assure ourselves of the safety of the service in the light of a shortage of qualified nursing staff to support these patients.

The shortage has been caused by some sickness absence and staff departures coinciding with a period of maternity leave which has left the service short of nearly 100 hours per week of qualified staff nurse cover for these patients.

Clinical staff in neurosciences have carefully risk-assessed a number of options and recommended moving the patients into the neurosciences department where their safety at night can be supervised by the specialist nurses on these wards.

We recognise that this is not a suitable environment for longer-stay patients requiring rehabilitation and therefore this measure is only a temporary action we have regrettably had to take to deliver a safe service while staff recruitment is underway.

While the present arrangement is in place, we are working closely with colleagues at the Western Community Hospital to ensure that patients continue to have access to the services they require. We are now monitoring the service to ensure we understand the impact it is having on access and the patient experience, as well as the safety and quality of the clinical service.

Staff in the service met with patients and their relatives to explain the reason for this decision and to listen to their concerns about the change of location. Every effort is being made to enable the patients to have access to appropriate environments including the use of a mini-bus to organise supervised visits off-site.

We will fully re-open Victoria House as soon as safe staffing levels are restored. Although recruitment is difficult to forecast, we anticipate re-opening the facility in September or October of this year provided we can do so safely.

You will be aware that there has been a long period of discussion between the Trust and our partners about revising the model of care for specialist neuro-rehabilitation services. These discussions are continuing, but I would like to reassure you that they have had no impact on the decision we have taken or our determination to re-open Victoria House at the earliest opportunity.

I am more than happy to speak further with you about this decision so please do not hesitate to get in touch with any further questions

KR  
MH