

I am sure the board will be well aware of recent events in Cornwall, and the rest of England, where older people with a mental illness (65+ with an organic mental disorder) are being placed hundreds of miles away from their home in psychiatric hospitals. Conveyance to these hospitals can take 4-5 hours plus, with some hospitals (with the only available bed in the country sometimes being in Northampton or further still) being many, many, miles away.

I wondered therefore what are your plans to improve the services for older residents of Cornwall who require these services? As I understand it, there is a crisis currently with the local older care ward (Garner Ward) at Bodmin Hospital, and I wonder what plans there may be to resolve this?

The situation is complex and will require a co-ordinated response by health and social care partners locally.

Dementia in-patient care for older people is highly specialised, and should focus on the most vulnerable. Admission should only be for those with both behavioural and psychological symptoms which are complex, and cannot be managed in another setting.

Garner Ward is treating patients with increasingly complex needs. In order to do this effectively and safely we do, at times, restrict the number of patients on the ward. Currently over 50% of patients on Garner are waiting for discharge and a placement elsewhere. Our discharge liaison nurse has excellent links with homes locally but many patients on Garner have very specific needs for example, single sex, spacious environments, skilled staff and locations which provide meaningful occupation. The availability of these is very limited.

Over the last five years, the number of specialist dementia nursing homes has decreased; either through closure or a change in their registration status (many are opting to be residential homes). There is also a shortage of domiciliary support which further restricts the care options and recently resulted in one patient being sent out of county because an appropriate package could not be put in place.

Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust is currently reviewing its service to ensure it is targeting its resources most effectively. Alongside this, the Trust is working with partners to progress solutions to reduce delayed transfers for care.

We are a research active trust, to get involved in a research project, please email cpn-tr.CFTresearch@nhs.net

For information on mental health medication visit choiceandmedication.org/cornwall

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