

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members  
C/o Members' Desk

Direct Dial/Ext: 01622 694486  
Fax:  
Email: paul.wickenden@kent.gov.uk  
Ask for: Paul Wickenden  
Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Date: 16 October 2008

Dear Councillor

## **HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - FRIDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2008**

I am now able to enclose, for consideration tomorrow, Friday 17 October 2008 at the meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

### **Agenda No Item**

#### **7. Delayed Transfers of Care from Acute Hospital Trusts (Pages 1 - 4)**

*Steve Phoenix, Chief Executive and Sharon Jones, Director of Community Services, West Kent Primary Care Trust; Nikki Luffingham, Chief Operating Officer, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust; Jessica Scott, Head of Clinical Site and Operational Safety, Medway Foundation Trust; Sarah Andrews, Director of Nursing, Simon Perks, Deputy Director of Commissioning and Sue Baldwin, Assistant Director, Intermediate Care Services, Eastern & Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust; Andy Schofield, Head of Nursing for Medicine and Lesley White, Acute and Emergency Services Manager, East Kent Hospitals Trust; Steve Leidecker, Director of Operations, KASS and Anne Tidmarsh, Head of Adult Services, East Kent and Janice Duff, District Manager, East Kent, KASS will be in attendance for this item.*

Yours sincerely



**Peter Sass**  
**Head of Democratic Services & Local Leadership**

This page is intentionally left blank





HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

10 October 2008

Mr Bryan Cope  
Chairman - Health Overview & Scrutiny  
Kent County Council  
County Hall  
Maidstone  
Kent ME14 1XX

*Dan Bryson*

Thank you very much indeed for inviting me to give evidence to the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee concerning Delayed Discharges from Acute Hospitals across Kent.

The latest figures (attached) indicating that 6,467 bed days were lost at Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust due to delayed discharges from 15 October 2007 to 6 July 2008 are unacceptable both in terms of the financial cost and the threat to life.

As you know, this has been an issue of considerable concern to me for some time and I am grateful for the Committee's investigation. I believe you now have an opportunity to recommend far-reaching changes which could significantly improve healthcare in the county.

Following the Healthcare Commission's c. Difficile, I undertook a series of meetings across the healthcare sector with my colleague Sir John Stanley MP. These meetings included discussions with the Chairman and Chief Executive of Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, consultant, nursing and administrative staff at both Maidstone and Kent & Sussex Hospitals (including Accident & Emergency), the Chief Executive of NHS West Kent (PCT) and the Cabinet Member and Director of KCC Social Services.





\Cont...

I believe the issue of infection control, waiting times for emergency admissions and delayed discharges are inextricably linked. If patients are unable to pass through the hospital system smoothly, the threat of infection grows. If beds are unavailable on hospital wards, the numbers being held in Accident & Emergency increases, including patients with suspected infections, who must be held in isolation. This leads to unacceptable overcrowding and waiting times.

On my visits, it was clear to me that, at times, A&E services had been close to breaking point with ambulances being made to wait outside the A&E Department at both the Kent & Sussex and Maidstone Hospitals because there have not been enough beds to admit patients.

A&E consultants are clear: the previous management closed too many beds, and now there are simply not enough to cope with the number of people needing them.

As well as overcrowding and delay for emergency patients, this situation is a nightmare for A&E staff as they struggle to find a bed or sometimes even a trolley for newly admitted patients.

In terms of solutions, I urge the Committee to pursue several lines of inquiry:

1. Seek absolute clarity on the latest delayed discharge figures with the early publication of information relating to delayed discharges from the Commission for Social Care Inspection's annual assessment of Kent Adult Social Services. This report is not currently due to be published until November.
2. Request a full report drawing together the actions now being taken by all agencies to address the problem. In particular, the Committee should look at the effectiveness of multi-agency working and the interfaces between each health service within the system.






\Cont...

3. Address the bureaucratic burden of form filling, etc and how a simpler process could speed hospital discharges.
4. Consider all possible options for re-opening hospital beds without delay. For example – re-opening the closed beds at the community hospitals in West Kent would free beds at the Kent & Sussex Hospital.
5. Consider what further measures could be introduced to care for patients to ensure that they are cared for more appropriately without reaching Accident & Emergency.
6. Assess what further reasonable steps can be taken to ensure that patients or their relatives, in exercising their choice for ongoing care, do not remain in acute beds while awaiting discharge.
7. Call for further clarity regarding and the funding of residential/nursing beds by Health or Social Care eg the issue of “Continuing Care”.
8. Investigate the potential for Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust to take over the management the Community and Cottage Hospital beds as part of a “whole system” approach to move patients out of acute beds.

I hope this letter provides a useful outline to the Committee of my areas of concern and look forward to giving evidence to you at 11.00pm on Friday.

*Yours sincerely,*  


Greg Clark MP

This page is intentionally left blank