

Item 7: Bedgebury Unit: Proposed Decommissioning and Future Rehabilitation Pathway

By: Gaetano Romagnuolo, Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny

To: Kent and Medway NHS Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee,
2 September 2026

Subject: Bedgebury Unit: Proposed Decommissioning and Future
Rehabilitation Pathway

Summary: This report invites the Kent and Medway NHS Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the information provided by the NHS Kent and Medway.

1) Introduction

- a) This report was prepared in response to requests from the Medway Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HASC) and the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), following each Committee's individual determination that the proposed decommissioning of Bedgebury Unit constituted a substantial variation of service.
- b) The report responds to four recurring concerns raised through scrutiny:
 - i) whether the proposal is financially driven
 - ii) whether closure would affect acute mental health bed capacity
 - iii) whether it would increase adult social care demand; and
 - iv) whether sufficient assurance exists that current and future patients will be supported safely through alternative pathways.

2) Joint Scrutiny

- a) Regulation 23 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 requires relevant NHS bodies and health service providers to consult a local authority about any proposal which they have under consideration for a substantial development or variation in the provision of health services in the local authority's area. This obligation requires notification and publication of the date on which it is proposed to make a decision as to whether to proceed with the proposal and the date by which Overview and Scrutiny may comment.
- b) The Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) considered the proposals relating to the Proposed Pathway Redesign and Decommissioning of Bedgebury Ward on 3 June 2026. They determined that the reconfiguration constituted a substantial variation in the provision of health services.

Item 7: Bedgebury Unit: Proposed Decommissioning and Future Rehabilitation Pathway

- c) The Medway Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HASC) considered the item on 16 June 2026. The Committee also deemed the changes to be a substantial variation in the provision of health services in Medway.
- d) In line with Regulation 30 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013¹, the Kent and Medway NHS Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) is meeting for the first time of this issue. The JHOSC may:
 - make comments on the proposal;
 - require the provision of information about the proposal;
 - require the relevant NHS bodies and health service providers to attend before it to answer questions in connection with the consultation.
- e) Under the Health and Care Act 2022, any interested party can request the Secretary of State to call-in a proposed substantial health service development or variation. There are no timing requirements for when call-in requests should be submitted - as long as a proposal for reconfiguration exists, a request may be made at any point during that process. However, local attempts to resolve the issue must have been exhausted before this happens.
- f) The JHOSC has delegated powers from both HASC and HOSC to request the Secretary of State to call-in the proposal should it wish to.

4. Recommendation

RECOMMENDED:

1. Note the findings of the Bedgebury service review.
2. Note that Bedgebury comprises 10 ring-fenced forensic pre-discharge beds and is not part of the wider acute mental health inpatient bed base.
3. Note the significant reinvestment in community rehabilitation pathways, Assertive Outreach and step-down provision.
4. Note the evidence available regarding patient outcomes, crisis presentations and wider system impacts, including adult social care.
5. Consider whether the additional assurance requested through the substantial service variation process has been satisfactorily addressed.
6. Provide any recommendations for consideration by the ICB prior to any final commissioning decision.

¹ When NHS bodies and health services consult more than one local authority on a proposal which they have under consideration for a substantial development of or variation in the provision of health services in the local authorities' areas, those local authorities must appoint a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) for the purposes of the consultation.

Item 7: Bedgebury Unit: Proposed Decommissioning and Future Rehabilitation Pathway

Background Documents

Kent County Council (2026) '*Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (3/06/2026)*',
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=112&MId=9723&Ver=4>

Medway Council (2026) 'Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (16/06/2026)',
<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=131&MId=6636&Ver=4>

Contact Details

Gaetano Romagnuolo
Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny
Email: gaetano.romagnuolo@kent.gov.uk
03000 416624