

**The Limes Focus Group
Brent Lane
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Mrs Christy Holden
Kent County Council
Adult Services
Brenchley House
123-135 Week Street
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6th January 2010

Dear Mrs Holden

In response to your letter dated 14th December 2010 to the Limes Focus Group, there are several issues that have been raised from the panel's observations.

We are interested to know that there was a Panel and a meeting had taken place to discuss the Limes proposal.

- We would like to know why a member of the focus group was not invited to be present and be available to answer questions?
- Who are the representatives of this panel? You give a brief description of the divisions. But are they all qualified to give an opinion on health and social care? – Probably not if they are from Personnel, Finance and Policy and Standards departments.
- We would like to know when this took place and would like to see the minutes of this meeting?

Re: the new policy direction coalition government policy.

- This is interesting – considering the coalition government began in May 2010 and the announcement of the proposed closure of the Limes was announced on the 14 June 2010. This is a very short time span indeed for this policy to be organised and is only an observation of the panel, whom may or may not be qualified to make these decisions on social care.

Part of the Limes role is to assist and communicate with the NHS which we and the KCC Case Managers have been doing the Limes for the last 8 years to provide continuing care for people aged 55plus.

- We would like to see copies of minutes of these KCC and NHS colleagues meetings.

Transforming social care – preventing and avoiding crisis admissions

- There will always be someone in crisis and enablement at home will not always possible.
- So what happens to people if they need a place of safety due to abuse from someone or self inflicted e.g. they have been living in squalor ? Where will they go? Block a hospital bed or left in their own house? – So much for the safeguarding adults policy!!!

Local commissioners have identified how alternative enablement services can be re-provided.

- We would like written proof of this information from the local commissioners and who they are?
- What the alternatives for enablement services are and why this has not been shared with the Limes employees? After reading the report published on 30th December, we now know the preferred option is Gravesham Place. We had heard rumours of this, early in the

consultation period, so why wasn't this information provided to staff, service users, the press, councillors and Dartford's MP at the beginning of the consultation period.

Reasons why the Limes Focus Group did not present a business plan.

- This was never our plan, as the members of the focus group are qualified to provide a care service and are not accountants or business strategists. There are plenty of employees in KCC already paid to do this!
- We would have been able to inform you, how many referrals the Limes receive, if asked, although we submit admissions and discharges twice a week, so some of this information is readily available.
- We were unable to provide a financial breakdown to show how the NHS could run the services more cost effectively. We do not have access to information of the cost of an individual NHS hospital bed per night, per person as we do not work in the NHS.

NHS colleagues want to work with KASS to deliver re-enablement services but have not identified the Limes in this.

- Who are the NHS colleagues who want to work with KASS and why was this yet again not shared with the Limes staff? Is the Limes staff expected to communicate with NHS hospital managers and West Kent PCT managers to keep the Limes open for business? It seems that KASS seem to be shirking this responsibility and have not given the Limes an opportunity to be identified.

Also quoted in your letter...The cost of the Limes is a factor in the proposals

- This is interesting – totally different to what Councillor Graham Gibbens said when debating at the council meeting on 16th December when he categorically said “this is not about money!” You can see this on the web cast for proof!

Re: non chargeable for up to six weeks.

- What are the 2003 regulations?

Individuals may not choose to use the service if we gave the actual cost of £1,000-£1,500 per week

- Even in the private independent sector - yet again denying potential service users the choice of paying any amount.

Re: capped charges does not reflect the full cost of the services.

- Maybe KCC personnel, payroll and accounts departments should have looked at the Kent Scheme policy and term and conditions many years/months ago. If there were concerns regarding care staff receiving enhancements whilst they are on sick or annual leave, negotiations of night and weekend staff terms and conditions could have taken place. As the Limes provides a 24 hour care service, another KCC carer covers a shift on the rota, the enhancements are paid out again, doubling the cost of the service.
- Maybe this is what closing and selling off 11 KCC care homes is all about...no KCC management staff (or officers as county councillors seem to call them) want to admit to what a financial faux pas has been created by their incompetence and lack of financial forward planning! Many members of staff have highlighted this and wanted this included in the Limes Focus Group's proposal, but Unison declared that we could be sued by Unison if this was included.

Charging staff for using for office space area would generate a marginal income.

- We feel this is a very dismissive response considering we have to record every penny for audit purposes we think any income, no matter how small, would be a positive asset. We understand from colleagues currently work at Lawrence House, there will be no social service office in Dartford from February 2011. Social workers will be expected to hot desk within decreasing office space at Joynes House, Gravesend and receive no mileage expenses for travelling to clients in the Dartford area. We are sure they would be grateful of the office

space to cut down on travelling time and being able to have access to a computer or internet line.

Training is currently part of the Limes service.

- Training venues for staff based in North West Kent has always been limited.
- As KCC are encouraging and saying older people want to stay longer in their own home, there will be an increased requirement for community equipment assessment training and moving and handling training which some of the training takes place in the therapy bedroom and bathroom for more realistic purposes. Where will this be training take place now? In a spare small office in Joynes House?

The Limes cannot take on its own maintenance responsibilities while it remains part of KCC.

- This is a whole wider issue for Kent and how council tax payers' money is wasted. KCC staff and Councillors with such responsibilities of finance and facilities management should be reviewing changes as soon as possible

The promised Day Centre not being built in Dartford

- What is section 106 funding?
- So the lack of a new day centre being built has now fallen to Dartford Council and the downturn in market. How convenient! And no grants available for a day centre to be built? How come the Guru Nanak centre obtained grants clearly stated in Oliver Mills's letter dated in May 2010, only one month before the announcement of the proposed closure of the Limes Day Centre?
- There are plenty of buildings in Dartford that are laying empty, so why couldn't grants be organised and obtained to renovate a building for the day centre?

The building will be in need of significant investment and does not meet the standards

- When will it need this as The Limes was only renovated 8 years ago at a cost of £650,000?
- What further investment is expected to be required? If we are talking about the en suite bathrooms - The service users are encouraged to be active within the lounge areas and usually spend time in their rooms at night, or if they are instructed by a GP to require bed rest or are being monitored or quarantined due to an infectious illness. In all of these cases, a commode is sufficient and always previously has been. Unless they have been paying into BUPA or a similar healthcare scheme, most people won't expect en suites in a care home- you certainly wouldn't get this in a hospital.

And finally, by closing the Limes, it would be possible for **some** money to be put towards the savings target! And to quote Mr Gibben's again....."it's not about money" What complete nonsense!

Regards

The Limes Focus Group