

Thursday, 11 September

## Temporary pause to inpatient ward at Faversham Cottage Hospital

The purpose of this paper is to provide Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) members with an update on the decision to temporarily pause the 16-bed inpatient service at Faversham Cottage Hospital (FCH), due to safety.

### Background

As you are aware, this decision to pause was made on the grounds of patient safety, due to ongoing staffing challenges, particularly within registered nursing and leadership roles.

Despite efforts to bolster staffing; transferring colleagues from alternative hospitals, recruiting to vacant posts, supporting staff to return to work and using our bank and agency workforce, the situation became unsustainable and was placing pressure on other services.

While this was not an easy decision, the **safety and wellbeing of our patients and staff is always our highest priority.**

Our FCH staff remain temporarily redeployed to support services across east Kent, including other community hospitals and community-based roles. Their ongoing commitment to delivering high quality patient care and their patience and resilience with this process is acknowledged.

### Recruitment update

Our recruitment efforts for registered nurses are ongoing with a rolling programme of advertisements and interviews. The trust has had received a very positive response to these campaigns, with significant interest across all our community hospital sites.

To date, three nurses have accepted positions at Faversham and interviews are ongoing during the coming weeks to fill further vacancies. We are also in the process of supporting colleagues back to work with phased returns following significant periods of sickness absence, which is key to the recovery plans. Our returned leaders are focussing their efforts on the vital recruitment process.

Due to the time required for notice periods, pre-employment checks and inductions, we anticipate staggered start dates over the coming months, with staff inducting at near-by hospitals before transferring to Faversham at a point where we have safe staffing levels. While good initial progress has been made, we will not consider reopening the inpatient ward until it is safe and sustainable to do so.

We continue to closely monitor the recruitment and staffing position and aim to set and share a re-opening date as soon as we can safely do so.

Until that time, admissions to Faversham Cottage Hospital will remain paused.

Chair John Goulston Chief Executive Mairead McCormick

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### **Keeping our communities informed**

We continue to provide regular updates to staff, public and stakeholders, including the district and town council and Friends of Faversham Cottage Hospital. This has included stakeholder briefings and regular updates on our website – [www.kentcht.nhs.uk/favershamhealth](http://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/favershamhealth)

An update on the temporary closure and recovery plans was provided at a **public update and listening event** at the Alexander Centre, in Faversham on 2 September, attended by more than 200 residents. It was attended by Helen Whately, MP. Members of the public have also been able to feedback via an online and paper survey, which remains live.

KCHFT colleagues will also be attending Faversham Healthy Futures meeting on 2 October to provide further updates to the public on our progress to re-open.

### **Other services remain unaffected**

Other NHS services on the site, including the urgent treatment centre and GP services, continue to remain unaffected. Some of our facilities colleagues have remained onsite and continue to support services at the neighbouring health centre.

We continue to monitor the impact of this pause on the wider healthcare system in east Kent. So far, this has been minimal, with no reported issues around access to rehabilitation beds.

We also operate community hospitals in Whitstable, Herne Bay, Deal, Westbrook (Thanet), Hawkhurst and Westview in Tenterden, with our colleagues at HCRG Care Group, running inpatient wards in Sittingbourne and Sheppey.

Our community nursing, community rehabilitation and urgent care services are strengthening their efforts to support recovery at home from an acute hospital, where many people prefer to be and where they can regain independence more quickly.

### **Next steps**

KCHFT remains committed to re-opening the ward and will continue to provide HOSC members with regular updates on our progress.

**Rachel Dalton, Chief Allied Health Professions Officer  
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust.**