

CRISIS IN THE CARE OF PATIENTS SUFFERING FROM A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS - VERY LONG WAITS FOR MENTAL HEALTH BEDS AT THE HOMERTON A&E - 12 HOURS OR MORE

I know you are fully aware of the data below regarding 12 hour plus waits in the Homerton A&E for patients in a mental health crisis needing a bed to be found for them. Such long waits not only exacerbate their crisis but are likely to be unlawful in terms of breaches to the statutory duty of Parity of Esteem. Long waits in AE for patients in a mental health crisis also puts a strain on the AE staff and reduces their capacity to admit patients needing emergency care arriving in AE. The consequences for patients are dire. In one case a patient waited in A&E for 48 hours and twice fled from the A&E, and in another a patient having waited for a long period in A&E for readmission to ELFT attempted suicide.

Thank you for your questions and your concern. Please see the answers below, prepared by:

Dan Burmingham, Mental Health Programme Director North East London

Andrew Hobobin, Deputy Borough Director - City and Hackney| East London NHS Foundation Trust.

1) Can you please tell me what action you are taking at ICB and LBH level to resolve this crisis?

We would like to highlight the following actions that are being taken locally.

- Extra funding has been granted for additional psych liaison staff for the winter until the end of March 2023.
- A new crisis hub in the Raybould Centre is due to open in February 2023. As a way of reducing waiting times, this will assess people who attend the emergency department but don't need to be seen there.
- The Homerton have appointed two mental health nurses in the emergency department to look after people with a mental health problem who are waiting.
- 40 additional beds have been contracted in the private sector until the end of March 2023.
- Since 2018 an escalation protocol has been in place in order to avoid 12 hour breaches for patients in A&E. These are escalated to Senior Managers within 4-6 hours. The number of long-stay patients is reducing and discharge planning /throughput is improving.
- Length of stay is being monitored through weekly reporting, which keeps the issue visible and a priority.
- Weekly complex case discussions with consultants and multi-disciplinary teams are carried out.
- Communication and decision making along the patient discharge pathways has been improved.
- There is increased buy-in from senior clinicians for finding solutions to this problem, including a Capacity & Flow QI Group - lead by Clinical Director.
- A Social Work Discharge Team has been established, which works across the wards with non-care coordinated patients.

- Bed and breakfasts are used as a transition when necessary to avoid housing issues causing delays (only for patients ready for discharge)

2) Will the ICB commission the provision of more beds to meet local need?

5 additional beds have been contracted in the private sector until the end of March 2023.

3) How are the ICB, ELFT the City and Hackney Health and Care Partnership and NHS England, collaborating to secure adequate numbers of beds for patients in an acute mental health crisis?

The ICB, ELFT and NELFT meet several times a week to share our bed numbers and we regularly 'share' beds between the two Trusts. The ICB, ELFT and CH Health and Care Partnership work together through our collaborative integrated care structures at both a place based level and a NEL wide level to ensure that there is adequate inpatient bed capacity and that the bed capacity is supported by alternatives to admission which reduce the demand. In addition ELFT and NELFT monitor the bed situation through weekly UEC meetings attended by Operational leads. The bed base is currently being reviewed as part of our 2023-24 review of the Mental Health Long Term plan against our other commitments. All of the above organisations are part of this planning process which will conclude at the end of March 2023.

4) Is each organisation committed to reducing and eventually eliminating these very long waits, with the aim of bringing A&E waiting times for patients in a mental health crisis, back to no more than four hours from arrival in A&E to admission?

Yes, each organisation is committed to this target and as part of the 2023-24 planning process they are reviewing the A&E mental health pathway with a view to providing a higher level of support.