

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, & EARLY HELP SERVICES

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| TO: | ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE | | |
| DATE: | 29 JUNE 2015 | AGENDA ITEM: | 15 |
| TITLE: | ABSCONDING FROM PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | COUNCILLOR EDEN | PORTFOLIO: | ADULT SOCIAL CARE |
| SERVICE: | COUNCILLOR HOSKIN LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES | WARDS: | HEALTH BOROUGHWIDE |
| LEAD OFFICER: | SIMON HILL RICHARD WOODFORD | TEL: | 0118 937 2332 / 937 2303 |
| JOB TITLE: | PRINCIPAL COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATORS (SCRUTINY) | E-MAIL: | Richard.woodford@reading.gov.uk Simon.hill@reading.gov.uk |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report recommends that the Committee, as the Council's health scrutiny body, set up a Task and Finish Group to investigate the recently reported issue of an increase in mentally ill absconders from psychiatric hospitals and in particular from Prospect Park Psychiatric Hospital in Reading.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That a task and finish group be set up to investigate the issues behind the increase in the number of mentally ill patients absconding from psychiatric hospitals and in particular from Prospect Park Psychiatric Hospital in Reading;
- 2.2 That the Committee appoint a Chair and agree the membership of the task and finish group.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Recent articles in the press, notably in The Times on 15 May 2015 and The Reading Chronicle on 28 May 2015, have highlighted the increase in the number of mentally ill patients absconding from care. It has been reported

that more than 15,300 mentally ill patients have walked out of hospitals in the previous four years and that the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has seen an increase of 572% in absconding, from 18 to 121, between 2011 and 2014. In fact a mental health patient absconds or leaves a Berkshire psychiatric ward without permission on average of once every 36 hours according to Foundation Trust data.

- 3.2 In addition to what has been reported in the press the Council has received correspondence from a resident of the Borough who has a keen and personal interest in the issue, which has been circulated to the Chair of the Committee and the Lead Councillors for Adult Social Care and Health. Concern has also been raised by local Ward Councillors.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to appoint a Chair and agree the membership of the task and finish group to carry out a scrutiny review of this issue. The task and finish group will then meet to discuss and agree the timescale and format of the review as part of a more detailed scoping and planning process, with the aim of submitting a report on their findings to the meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee on 5 November 2015.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 Corporate Plan priority: safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The findings of the review will be shared with health colleagues and will be available to all interested parties and the wider community.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant to this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Committee's terms of reference state that the Committee will undertake the health scrutiny functions of the local authority under Section 244 of the National Health Services Act 2006 as amended by Sections 190 and 191 of the Health & Social Care Act 2012.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None arising from this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Articles in The Times on 15 May 2015 and the Reading Chronicle on 28 May 2015.