

Thorpe Coombe House

Thorpe Coombe Hospital
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16th of September 2015

Dear Jaime

RE: 'Talking with the Homeless Community in Waltham Forest'

Thank you for your very helpful and interesting report which has highlighted some areas of concern around access to Mental Health Service for homeless people. Our response is detailed below:

- The Community Drug and Alcohol team is now closed but at the time of the report it operated Monday to Friday 9:00-17:00pm. On two days per week they offered evening clinics. They operated a drop in assessment clinic which by its very nature was unplanned which meant that people could wait some time for their as they prioritised assessments based on risk.
- I have clarified with the Public Health commissioners and having a Waltham Forest GP was not a requirement of CDAT service provision therefore this must have been a misunderstanding with the worker who spoke to the service user concerned.
- There was an Integrated Alcohol Partnership between NELFT and Turning Point which delivered community alcohol detoxification and there were clear pathways from Whipps for service users to access community detox. It was not normal practice for Whipps to admit people for an alcohol detox unless there was a clear medical reason for doing so.
- Alcohol liaison was provided from CDAT between 9:00-17:00 to Whipps Cross Hospital. Outside of these hours alcohol liaison is provided by the Psychiatrist Liaison Service in Whipps. There is currently now 24/7 coverage for alcohol liaison however this may change with the new provider.
- Lifeline now provides all substance misuse services in Waltham Forest.
- The Psychiatric liaison Service has a 1 hour response time to referrals in A&E and NELFT have worked very hard with Whipps to ensure we get timely referrals to minimise wait times. We continue to work to improve the experience of mental health service users in A&E which includes

offering training to the Whipps Cross staff. We also have made changes so that NELFT staff are more visible in A&E so that those service users with mental health problems are monitored when they are waiting for further assessments.

- NELFT believes that A&E is not the appropriate place for somebody who is having a mental health crisis. Therefore we have developed a 24 hour crisis line, Mental Health Direct that anyone within Waltham Forest can call to access mental health support. We have also extended the hours of the Waltham Forest Access, Assessment and Brief Intervention team. This service provides initial assessments, signposting and brief interventions for people with mental health problems and accepts self-referral and walk-ins.

NELFT continuously strives to deliver a quality service and staff are encouraged to manage their time and diaries so that service users receive accessible and timely support. All staff where able should notify service users in advance if there are any delays in attending for people's appointments. Delays are sometimes unavoidable however we would expect where possible for service users to be informed and given the opportunity to rearrange if requested. I hope that this responds to the concerns raised in your report.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to participate, receive feedback and respond.

Yours sincerely



Philippa Galligan
Assistant Director Mental Health Services – Waltham Forest