

Thursday 23rd March 2023

**Office of the Chair & Chief Executive
Trust Headquarters**
Swandean
Arundel Road
Worthing
West Sussex
BN13 3EP

Dear Councillor Mitchell,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of Sussex Police and Crime Panel, regarding the vital role Sussex Police plays in supporting people with mental health problems.

I want to start my response by acknowledging the many operational pressures and challenges that Sussex Police is responsible for managing in order to keep our local communities safe. I completely understand the complexities presented by ensuring that people experiencing a mental health crisis are provided with safe, appropriate care in the right place. I also want to acknowledge the continued commitment of Sussex Police to work with us as a valued partner to manage this need.

In terms of the three specific issues you have raised with me, I will provide an overview of current work underway with respect to each of them.

(1) Urgently review the mental health practitioner support available to Sussex Police.

This is part of the rationale for the review of the pan-Sussex Street Triage service we run in partnership with Sussex Police. Our four Street Triage teams provide mental health assessments in the community, with mental health professionals working alongside police officers. I believe the development of these services is testament to our shared commitment to joint working, and I am keen to ensure the review leads to practical recommendations about how we can build upon this model. A review of the service is part of our mental health urgent care plan, which our partners within the Police are aware of.

More immediately, we have in recent months increased staffing on our Blue Light Line to provide 24/7 clinical advice to emergency services and reduce use of Section 136 where possible. We have also been working with South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAmb) on a Blue Light Triage Service. This seven day a week service provides an alternative model of support for people experiencing a mental health crisis who have called an ambulance. Sussex Police can also refer to this service via our North West Sussex Street Triage team. Evaluation of this pilot demonstrates:

Chair: Peter Molyneux

Chief Executive: Dr Jane Padmore

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A teaching trust of Brighton and Sussex Medical School

- Early intervention reduces the likelihood of detention under the Mental Health Act the associated distress and trauma, whilst also reducing time on scene;
- The majority of cases are managed and resolved by telephone triage, with a lower proportion of people needing face to face assessment and support;
- There is a reported increase in positive (least restrictive) interventions.

On the basis of this pilot we are working with our system partners to expand the service Sussex -wide.

- (2) Reduce the unavailability of police officers carrying out regular duties due to the time spent accompanying individuals in Accident and Emergency departments and**
- (3) Reduce the growth and use of Accident and Emergency departments as a police-staffed place of safety.**

I am very conscious of the operational pressure which results from police officers having to remain with people who have been placed on Section 136 of the Mental Health Act (MHA) within acute hospital Emergency Departments. Our five Haven services provide an Alternative Place Based Place of Safety where possible, a change to our care pathway we have introduced to reduce pressure on acute hospital Emergency Departments. We have six designated Health Based Places of Safety, though two have been out of action for a number of months because of the need for capital estates work. This work will be completed by the end of March. This will enable us to have the full suite of service provision in place and it will, in turn, alleviate some of the pressures upon Sussex Police.

As part of our work with partners we have started a 6-month pilot to reduce police supervision of people detailed under section 136 and improve patient experience. A key element of the pilot is data and intelligence gathering and evaluation to inform future service delivery.

More broadly, we are working with partners including Sussex Police on a review of our MHA Section 136 and 135 policy to identify further operational improvements we can make to meet the needs of people experiencing a mental health crisis. We are also working closely with our voluntary sector partners to strengthen the provision of Staying Well Services across Sussex: voluntary sector run centres which provide both one-to-one and group support. This requires a commitment from an NHS perspective for us to think and work differently, in order to draw more effectively on the specialist expertise of our voluntary sector partners. It is something I am strongly and personally committed to as CEO.

In conclusion

We co-host a quarterly Strategic Forum with Sussex Police to review 136 activity, the urgent care services we have in place and the further developments required to respond to the needs of our local communities. I was very struck, in particular, by the point you raised in your letter about the mental wellbeing of Sussex police officers. It feels that this is an

important issue that merits further exploration and I will ask my team to bring it to the next Strategic Forum.

I want to assure you that the issue of urgent mental health care is a priority area of focus for us, both as a specialist NHS provider and as a health and care system. We are reviewing our crisis pathway with a view to have an improved service in place by 1st October and I would very much welcome your involvement in shaping the changes we're making. If you would like to be involved, please let me know who we can engage with at Sussex Police to take this forward.

Having been substantively in post as CEO at Sussex Partnership for almost a year, I am heartened by - and very much appreciative of - the collaborative approach of our partners, including Sussex Police, in working with us to improve the quality of life for our local communities. A vital part of this is to ensure we are sensitive to the challenges faced by our partners, focused on avoiding defensiveness when it is clear there are improvements we need to drive from an NHS perspective, and genuinely committed to co-producing solutions to the problems we face. I hope my response to your letter demonstrates my personal commitment to this.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything I have outlined here, or any further issues relating to this important area, you would like to discuss.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane".

Dr Jane Padmore (RMN)
Chief Executive Officer
Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust