

# **LONDON HEALTH EMERGENCY**

## *The Health Watchdog*

12<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Dear Colleague,

### **PROPOSED CLOSURE OF GRESHAM 1 WARD AT THE BETHLEM**

I am writing to draw your attention to proposals which are currently out to consultation which would result in the closure of the current services at Gresham 1 ward at the Bethlem Hospital with the loss of at least 9 much-needed, acute adult mental health admission beds.

The proposal has been put forward in order to achieve "Cost Improvement" savings of an estimated £500,000 from the Croydon budget for adult, inpatient mental health services. It is clear from the consultation paper that this is a cash-led exercise with serious implications for adult mental health capacity, which will have an impact across south London.

There is a consensus amongst mental health professionals and politicians that recessions lead to an increased demand for mental health services. Loss of jobs and homes, and the daily grind of debt-pressures, can all be triggers for a breakdown. Against that background it is appalling that any mental health capacity could be considered for closure.

London Health Emergency is working with UNISON at South London and Maudsley to oppose these cuts and to make sure that everyone is aware of the consequences. We believe that £500,000 is peanuts compared to the billions spent on the bank bail-outs. Staff are already reporting increased demand for inpatient beds and there is a real fear that patients will end up in expensive private sector units – costing the NHS a fortune in fees and making a nonsense of the proposed savings.

Time is tight. We have until the 3<sup>rd</sup> April to stop these ill-conceived closure plans. We also hear that there may be further cuts in the pipeline so we need to act quickly. Contact Fran Bristow at Complex Care Services, Westways Resource Centre, 49 St James' Road, Croydon CR0 2UR or email her your objections to [fran.bristow@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:fran.bristow@slam.nhs.uk) and raise the issue with your MP and Councillor – these cuts must be stopped.

Yours sincerely,

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