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30 June 2011

Cllr Mohammed Javed,
20 Osbourne Road,
Oxbridge,
Stockton on Tees,
TS18 4DJ.

Dear Mohammed,

Improvements to older people's mental health services in Stockton

In line with the national dementia strategy our aim is to make sure that, where possible, people receive the care they need in their home environment. We have reduced inappropriate admissions to hospital and removed delays in the assessment and treatment processes so that patients get the care they need as quickly as possible.

Staff at Lustrum Vale (our 22 bed inpatient unit for older people in Stockton) have transformed the way they work to improve patient care and reduce the time individuals need to spend in hospital. Patients are receiving more support in their home environment and bed occupancy on the ward has decreased dramatically since the beginning of the year.

Over the last three months there have been less than five patients from Stockton on the 22 bed ward at any one time and currently there is only one patient on the unit.

Keeping empty beds open is not a good use of taxpayers' money, which could be used to help support people in the community. The board of directors has therefore agreed to temporarily close the unit from 1 July. From this date patients will be admitted to Westerdale Ward at Roseberry Park, Middlesbrough (next door to James Cook Hospital) where we have sufficient bed capacity.

This is a temporary closure and the unit can be re-opened at any time should this be necessary. In the meantime staff from Lustrum Vale will be redeployed to other inpatient units for older people and to community services in Stockton.

We will closely monitor this over the coming months and review the decision in October 2011, or earlier if required, in conjunction with the local Primary Care Trust. A full public consultation would take place before any decision on the permanent future of the unit was made.

I enclose a copy of the briefing we have given the local media together with a Q&A sheet.

I hope you find this information useful but if you have any queries please contact our Director of Operations for Teesside, David Brown, on 01642 853560, email david.brown@tevv.nhs.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Barkley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Martin Barkley
Chief Executive

Copy to: Peter Mennear, Scrutiny Team, Stockton Borough Council