



FROMESIDE

DEVELOPING SAFE AND SECURE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

“This is a major step forward in improving mental health services for local people” said Project Director Fred Inman. “We are on target to open the medium secure facilities at Blackberry Hill in October 2005 and work is now able to commence”

As recently as 2005, the new “Fromeside” opened in a purpose built, “state of the art” building on the Blackberry Hill site. The Medium Secure Unit is managed by Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP). A smaller service had been housed in the adjacent “Fromeside Clinic” but this unit did not meet the current demand, as the service needs to be provided as near as possible to service users’ communities.

Consequently, Forensic Services here virtually quadrupled in size in this 80 bed unit. As well as the increase in male provision this includes for the first time a specialised Women’s Service in the south-west; an integral but separate provision for women. Fromeside provides a light, airy environment and impressive range of facilities including a recreation hall, workshops, occupational therapy, arts psychotherapy (art, music and drama) and an adult learning suite. We are considered a highly innovative and supportive, nationally recognised forensic service.

Modernising mental health services has been an important part of the Government’s plans for the NHS and the priority is to ensure that people with severe and enduring mental illness receive services that are more responsive to their needs.

Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership has worked to improve mental health care available to local people including secure mental health services. There has been secure mental health services on the Blackberry Hill site for many years – the service had been based at Fromeside Clinic for seventeen years. Extending the secure mental health service has meant that we can provide a service which meets service users’ individual needs more effectively. Providing the right care in the right place at the right time leads to a safer, better quality service for everyone and allows us to care for more local people closer to their homes and families.

Fromeside, otherwise known as the West of England Forensic Mental Health Service, is now part of the Specialised and Secure Services Strategic Business Unit (SBU) within the NHS Trust. The “secure” part of the SBU also comprises of the High Dependency Rehabilitative Service – Wickham Unit (or “Low Security”) and Criminal Justice Liaison Service that operates within local prisons and courts. We have a good relationship with those within these services.

About Fromeside:

Fromeside accepts people who primarily have a mental illness for which there is effective treatment available.

We provide facilities for:

- 20 service users split between two admission wards including an 8 bed-roomed intensive care area
- 33 service users in 4 rehabilitation wards
- 15 service users who need longer term rehabilitation
- 12 bed self contained unit for women

Rehabilitation is part of the process of preparing service users to:

- return to their communities when their condition has improved to the point where they can safely be discharged
- or, move on to another level of care, for example the High Dependency Rehabilitation Unit (or “low security”) based at Wickham Unit (29 beds) also on the Blackberry Hill site or another mental health inpatient unit - if discharge is further in the future

Why we made changes:

There was not enough secure NHS mental health accommodation in this area and there was no service for women. Some local people have been cared for in other parts of the country, places as far away as Manchester and York, simply because there was nowhere else for them to go. This made it difficult for family and friends to visit. Treatment and rehabilitation are much more effective if carried out closer to family and home. Other service users who need secure mental health services are currently cared for in local acute mental health services.

Expanding the service allows the provision of a service which can meet service users’ changing needs more effectively. For example, some service users need much longer term rehabilitation - between five and ten years. In this new service we provide a self contained unit for those service users. Within the 33 rehabilitation beds we can provide separate services for faster (two to five years) and slower (around five years) stream rehabilitation.

The expanded service takes male service users from the area covered by “Avon”, Gloucester, Somerset and Wiltshire and female service users from Devon and Cornwall too.

Why base the service here?

At any one time about half the service users are likely to be Bristol residents. We have provided secure mental health services on this site for many years. We have a well-established effective team of specialist NHS staff, therapists and educational staff working here. We are keen to continue to build on that expertise, and to extend the range of specialist staff, so that we can enhance the quality of the service available to our service

users and their families. That would not happen in the same way if we were to develop new elements of the service in other parts of Bristol. Developing the new service around the existing service allowed a phased implementation and maintenance of a 'steady state' for the existing service. Fromeside, like many other secure mental health services, is located in a community with good transport links. This makes it easier for family and friends to visit the unit and for Service Users to travel home on leave when they are well enough.

Forensic Social Work

This has been an exciting time for social care at Fromeside. Although, it is still a comparatively young team, approximately five years old, it has achieved a good reputation and the work undertaken has been highly valued. The Forensic Social Workers have a clear role within the service under-pinned by the agreed standards for the Team.

Forensic Social Workers are now funded at Fromeside in line with the recommendations of the "Lewis Report". Therefore, while the team are employed by our "host authority", Bristol City Council, we work for and are funded by the Mental Health Trust (AWP). This has proved an exciting opportunity to develop new ways of working in line with best current practice while incorporating traditional social work values. The team work in partnership with professionals in community teams, in the localities.

The Team comprises 6 social workers and the Social Care Lead who line-manages the Team. Social Workers are allocated to the four geographical sector teams (68 male inpatients) and a specialist social worker is dedicated to the women's service (12 inpatients). The low-secure service, "Wickham Unit" (29 residents) is also on the Blackberry Hill site. The two social workers at Wickham (one full-time equivalent) are also members of the wider Social Work Team. Social workers work as members of a multi-disciplinary team but are also be members of a cohesive social care team, which has a strong identity offering mutual support and meets regularly (weekly) as a team. The team take overall responsibility for the *teams'* caseload and therefore there is a need occasionally to cross cover. Regular supervision is essential and is provided by the Social Care Lead. There is also a social worker based within Prison Mental Health Services who is viewed as a part of the wider team.

As Bristol City Council is the employing authority, social workers are subject to their conditions of service. It can be advantageous if Forensic Social Workers are "Approved" whereby their professional practice would be supported and training needs met by Bristol City Council. The Team are able to meet with social workers in Bristol as a part of the social care network, attending the regular meetings.

The social care team must operate in accordance with the values and principles that underpin all social work practice. This is reflected by the social workers meeting the social care standards set-out by Fromeside, the National Standards and the GSCC Codes of Practice.

The team are committed to enhancing the quality of life for service users and must challenge any discriminatory practice appropriately and effectively. There is a need to balance public protection with the rights of the individual service user, which is the fulcrum on which all good forensic social work practice is built. The social care staff work in partnership with significant others: service users, families, carers, victims, as well as other professionals in order to provide the fullest possible assessments; the understanding of environmental factors is integral to this work. The Team have developed a specialism of

Family Work for Psychosis in this secure setting for which we are provided regular specialised supervision. We are now in the process of encouraging other professions to join us further in this work.

Overall the work must be undertaken in an atmosphere that is free from any form of oppression, exploitation or discrimination, leading to a culture that gives an equal access to all those in need of services.

Richard Prior
Social Care Lead for Forensic Services

April 2010