

C/O Richard Plummer
Surrey County Council
Room 122
County Hall
KT1 2DN
020 8213 2782
richard.plummer@surreycc.gov.uk

Dr Claire Fuller
Senior Responsible Officer, Surrey Heartlands STP

6 November 2017

Dear Claire,

At its meeting on 10 December 2016 Surrey Health & Wellbeing Board received a report from the Police outlining the alarming frequency with which officers are required to attend acute trust sites in Surrey in response to reports by staff about incidents involving patients. At this meeting Deputy Chief Constable Gavin Stephens revealed that letters he had sent to the directors of security at each acute trust in Surrey in an attempt to find a resolution to the issue had gone mostly unanswered. The matter was referred to Surrey County Council's Wellbeing & Health Scrutiny Board as a body with the ability to hold providers to account and a letter was subsequently sent to the Chief Executive of each Trust from the Chairman of WHSB in March 2017 raising the issue and requesting that they act in order to mitigate the pressure on police resources and improve patient safety. Health & Wellbeing Board Members were therefore disappointed to learn on 6 July 2017 that little progress had been made in reducing the volume of police callouts to acute trust sites in the County.

The table below demonstrates the scale of demand placed on police resources by the volume of calls received from hospitals with officers collectively attending acute trust sites over 1,500 times in the 2016/17 financial year. Data within the table further reveals that crimes are recorded in just a small number of instances relative to the number of requests for assistance which begs the question of why the Police were called in the first place.

	EAST SURREY	EPSOM GENERAL	FRIMLEY PARK	ROYAL SURREY	ST PETERS
Total calls	937	510	694	558	1075
Attendance made	408	205	276	329	430
% attendance	44	40	40	59	40
Crimes recorded	84	86	65	76	100

% crimes	9	17	9	14	9
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Information provided at the meeting highlighted that almost 500 calls made to the Police originating from Surrey hospitals were to report a missing person, an issue that not only impacts on Police resources but also has disturbing implications for the safety of vulnerable patients while in the care of Surrey's hospitals. Anecdotal evidence demonstrates that officers are called out frequently to locate missing patients who have simply found their way to the wrong ward or have gone out for a cigarette, both of which are situations that can be easily prevented by staff making simple checks before alerting the Police. Incidents have also occurred where taskforces comprising in excess of ten officers, a helicopter, police dogs and various other resources have been sent to find patients who have been able to leave hospital while waiting to access mental health services. Basic improvements in security measures employed by Trusts' estates would not only reduce the pressure on police resources but also provide better care for those patients who are in an acutely vulnerable state and spare them the ignominy and anguish of a manhunt.

The Police & Crime Commissioner has stressed that officers will always respond to calls from hospitals in instances where the safety of staff and/or patients is at risk or where a criminal offence has occurred. Surrey Police are, however, subject to the same budgetary pressures as the rest of the public sector and it is vital that their resources are targeted towards where they are most needed. As Co-Chairs of the Health & Wellbeing Board, we are therefore contacting you in your capacity as Senior Responsible Officer of Surrey Heartlands STP to ask that you consider how security arrangements and staff training at acute trusts operating within the footprint can be improved to help mitigate the demand on police resources generated by hospitals and to deliver improved patient care. The Board received an update from each of Surrey's three STPs at its meeting on Thursday 7 September and Members will be keen to understand how Surrey Heartlands STP will work with the Police to consider what options are available for addressing this issue.

Best wishes,



Helyn Clack
Co-Chair
Surrey Health & Wellbeing Board



Dr Andy Brooks
Co-Chair
Surrey Health & Wellbeing Board