Our Ref: SC-174/lj
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Dear Michael

RE: Proposals for a single place of safety in Southwark

I am writing to you in connection with the proposal to merge the current single places of safety into one unit within Southwark.

As Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Financial Inclusion in Southwark I do have some concerns and questions that I feel haven't been addressed within the proposals.

The proposal paper dated 21st January does raise some issues and I would like some further clarification as they do have a significant impact on Southwark's social care resources and budgets and to some extent our housing budgets.

My primary concern is regarding the proposals for the AMHP service delivery. Moving to a single place of safety means that Southwark would ultimately have the legal responsibility for providing the service under section 13 of the Mental Health Act, although you do note the options available to provide cover from all four boroughs affected. This relies on the continued financial resource Croydon, Lambeth and Lewisham have to provide the service and given the very harsh and punitive cuts to local government I do question the viability of this in the longer term and there is a clear danger that Southwark could at some point in the future have to shoulder the full responsibility for providing the service.

We do not have the resource or the financial ability to do so, to put it in context I have had to find £33m of savings in my Adult Social Care budget for the next three years and would struggle to see how we could provide the resource for a full AHMP delivery service without having to potentially cut other vital services to our most vulnerable residents of whom I have responsibility for.

The report refers to agreeing a local service model for AHMP delivery services re section 136 assessments and I would like to know what progress has been made on this as I understand that it has not been possible to hold a meeting where there has been representation from all four boroughs.

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I would also like to know why the proposals for the single place of safety have progressed to the current stage without the delivery of this service being agreed beforehand.

My other main concern is the impact that moving to a single place of safety could potentially have on Southwark's temporary housing demand and budgets. If an individual is taken to a place of safety and is then found to be homeless the responsibility for providing accommodation falls on the borough of discharge. This could have a huge additional demand on our already overstretched need for temporary accommodation in the borough.

I would like a clear idea of how many homeless patients are taken to the current places of safety and how their homeless status is captured. A good indication of homelessness is via GP registration and I would also be interested to know how many patients taken to the current places of safety are not registered with a GP as this will give a good indication of the potential additional demand on our housing department.

There has been a lack of consultation with both myself as cabinet member and the Brunswick Park ward councillors as stakeholders in the proposals. I do note that public consultation has now taken place via Healthwatch but has any consultation been carried out with local residents, Tenants and Residents Associations and local Voluntary and Community organisations?

I hope you can make some way to reassuring me that the above concerns will be addressed prior to a final decision being made and I would like to arrange a meeting with you to discuss the proposals in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Stephanie Cryan
Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Financial Inclusion