

MEDIA RELEASE

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FIRST WOMEN-ONLY MENTAL HEALTH WARD OPENS

As part of its commitment to provide high quality inpatient services Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) opens its first women-only ward¹ today (Wednesday 16th December) at the Bradgate Mental Health Unit.²

The newly refurbished ward has been specially designed and redeveloped to enhance the patient experience by providing a better therapeutic environment and improved privacy and dignity.

The 18-bed facility opens to patients tomorrow, (Thursday 17th December), and is the first mental health ward for acute admissions in Leicester to provide all its patients with their own single room and en-suite bathroom.

At today's opening ceremony, special guest, Sir John Brigstocke, Chairman of NHS East Midlands Strategic Health Authority, will officially open the ward and reveal for the first time that the new facility will be known as Heather ward.

Suggestions for the name were received from staff, carers, patients and Trust members and short-listed by the Acute Care Forum. Heather was a very popular choice because it has so many meanings and a link to Leicestershire. It is a woman's name, plant species and shares the same spelling as the North West Leicestershire village Heather near Coalville.

Service users, carers and staff worked closely with the building contractors Interserve to design the décor and layout of the ward, which sees an increase in space for patients, more therapeutic activity areas, lounges, quiet areas and internet access.

The Department of Health supported the £2.5 million refurbishment with money allocated specifically to improve privacy and dignity in adult mental health wards.

Helped by the new ward design, staff will offer specialist care for women patients who are particularly vulnerable including; women who are pregnant, women from BME communities with a cultural need for a single sex ward, women with histories of abuse or violence and those who are assessed as vulnerable with regard to sexual behaviours.

A new, multidisciplinary staff team has been recruited and will be led by a Ward Matron and supported by two Consultant Psychiatrists. The team will work closely with LPT's Women's Managed Network, a group which actively involves women (and their family) to develop mental health and other services. Through the Network services and practice are informed, developed and supported to reflect the specific needs of women patients.

The opening the new ward will enable a reduction in bed numbers on each of the three adult acute wards at the Brandon Mental Health Unit³ from 30 to 24. This decision has been widely welcomed by both service users and staff as an improvement to the care environment on these large wards.

LPT Chief Executive Antony Sheehan said;

“The redesign of this ward is an important step towards our long term plans of developing centres of excellence for inpatients. We've created a specially designed environment that achieves the highest standards of privacy and care, which will lessen anxiety and help patients feel safer and more comfortable at a time when they are acutely ill.

“Some of our women patients have experienced physical, mental or sexual abuse and feel extremely vulnerable and anxious when they first arrive in hospital. Our staff have worked with patients and with carers to develop a model of care that recognises the very specific needs of women patients to help empower and support their recovery.”

Plans for the redevelopment of a further ward at the Bradgate Unit, to provide single rooms with en-suite bathroom, are currently underway with work expected to begin in spring 2010.

Notes to Editors

1. Please note that all LPT's inpatient facilities meet Department of Health requirements for same-sex accommodation; that is the provision of separate sleeping and bathroom facilities for men and women. The opening of this new ward further enhances the single sex facilities that LPT is able to offer to this client group.
2. The Bradgate Unit is located on the Glenfield Hospital site
3. The Brandon Unit is located on the Leicester General Hospital site

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