

## *Campaign to Save Mental Health Services in Norfolk & Suffolk*



### **PRESS RELEASE – ‘Concordat’ Protest 21/3/2014**

Norman Lamb, MP for North Norfolk and Minister of State at the Department of Health, is launching the Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat this week. However, mental health services – both nationally and locally – have been allowed to descend into crisis on his watch.

Staff from the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) have been warning Mr Lamb for two years that patients in Norfolk and Suffolk are being placed at risk due to severe underfunding of mental health services. Mr Lamb refuses to acknowledge this, claiming that the problem is the way mental health services are organized, not lack of funding.

Not only has Mr Lamb done nothing to rectify this situation, but it has now been announced that funding intended for mental health care has yet again been diverted to physical health care – because of the Mid Staffs inquiry. As Mr Lamb launches his concordat, local crisis teams are losing their most qualified and experienced staff and are unable to meet the demands placed on them:

- Most weeks, there are no acute mental health hospital beds available in Norfolk and Suffolk, beds which are needed to safeguard patients in a crisis.
- Specialist teams such as the Assertive Outreach teams have been abolished, leaving many patients unsupported and in crisis.
- More crises are occurring because of cuts to Community Mental Health teams.
- Early Intervention teams have suffered severe cutbacks.

For the first time in years, the suicide rate among patients known to mental health services is rising. In Norfolk we have witnessed many tragedies – in a five-month period in 2013, there were 22 deaths – causing frontline staff to speak out and help launch the Campaign to Save Mental Health Services in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Norman Lamb is quick to point the finger of blame at NSFT or the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). However, underlying their mismanagement of mental health services is the £20 million of cutbacks forced on the Trust by central government.

Norman Lamb talks about ‘parity of esteem’ (between physical and mental health), yet the Government has just diverted funds away from mental health to physical health. NHS England and Monitor have recommended cutting mental health funding by 20% more than for physical health care. Also, additional funding emanating from the mid-Staffs inquiry recommendations is being

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withheld from mental health services. Mental health has been underfunded for many years; it accounts for 28% of all illness, but receives only 13% of funding.

Mr Lamb, however, constantly refers to the way services are organized, rather than the resources needed. To send out an understaffed crisis team, without the option of admitting the patient to hospital when needed, is a recipe for disaster.

The recently published National Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide in Mentally Ill People, 2013, has highlighted the fact that now there is an increase in the suicide rate of people known to mental health services, including people under the care of crisis teams. The report advises caution in offering home—as opposed to hospital—treatment to people at risk who live alone.

Only the weekend before last, our local crisis team had to close its service to new referrals because it did not have enough staff to cover the shift. Mental health workers do not need more protocols, more policies, more standards, **WE NEED RESOURCES:** nurses, doctors, social workers, support workers, psychologists, and enough hospital beds to offer admission to patients in urgent need. Under Mr Lamb's government, we have lost over **1700** psychiatric beds in the last two years. Under Mr Lamb's government, in 2012/2013 there were 50,408 mental health Act detentions: **the highest number on record**. The number of people detained under the Act has risen by 12% in the past five years (Care Quality Commission report 'Monitoring the Mental Health Act 2012/2013').

**The whole framework of mental health services is creaking badly.**

**We need government funding, not concordats. Does this concordat allow Mr Lamb to present himself as a champion of the mentally ill, while actually delivering nothing of value?**

**THE CAMPAIGN WILL BE HOLDING A SILENT PROTEST OUTSIDE CARROW ROAD  
FOOTBALL GROUND, ASSEMBLE 11.30 AM ON FRIDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> MARCH.**

**For further information contact Terry Skyrme on 01263 825967**

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