



South London and Maudsley

**South London and Maudsley
UNISON Office
Bethlem Royal Hospital
Monks Orchard Road
Beckenham
BR3 3BX**

To: Local organisations in SE London

Hands off SLaM: Campaign against cuts in mental health services

Dear Colleague,

We are writing to invite your organisation to join with health workers at South London & Maudsley NHS Trust (SLaM) in what we hope will be a broad-based campaign to resist damaging cutbacks in mental health services in Lambeth and Southwark.

Both Southwark PCT and Lambeth PCT have outlined plans which would cut a total of £6m from mental health budgets this year, with a further £2m from Lambeth next year, and this is forcing SLaM into cuts in vital front line services despite having balanced its books as a Trust last year.

It is clear that cuts (“disinvestment”) on this scale can only be achieved at a heavy cost in terms of the quality and quantity of patient care. An indicative list of cuts drawn up by SLaM shows that they would hit some of the most vulnerable clients, and undermine the support network that has enabled many to live independently in the community ... resulting in more people requiring in-patient care.

Proposed cutbacks include the closure of rehabilitation, Older Adult and specialist care beds, the merger and reduction of Home Treatment Teams, addiction and dual diagnosis services and nursing home care for older adults, and cutbacks in care for Learning Disabilities, women and child and adolescent services. The Maudsley Hospital’s unique Emergency Clinic – a London-wide resource – faces closure by October.

UNISON is obviously concerned that the cash savings from these cuts depend upon job losses: but we are also angry that these short-sighted cuts will effectively reverse years of work establishing high quality and innovative services which have offered a successful and cost-effective alternative to in-patient treatment. Any short-term savings will soon be more than matched by the long-term cost of additional emergency and acute admissions which should have been avoided, including increased use of high-cost private sector placements. This is not modernisation: it is rolling back the wheel to the bad old days of institutionalised care.

We hope you will want to join us in our efforts to persuade the PCTs to think again about these cuts, many of which will require public consultation. We urge you to:

- Send us a brief statement of support we can use in an appeal to PCT members, councillors, MPs and ministers, including any additional information your organisation may have on the potential impact of the cuts



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- Write directly to the PCTs, SLaM, local MPs, and your local Patient Public Involvement Forum and your council's Oversight and Scrutiny Committee expressing your opposition to the cuts
- Circulate the fullest information to your members and supporters
- Write challenging these cuts to local newspapers and media
- Distribute copies of our campaign postcard ready to sign and send to MPs

With your support and the backing of the wider community we hope to put sufficient pressure on the PCTs to force them to reconsider these foolish and damaging cuts.

We hope you will want to join in this campaign to help ensure its maximum impact.

If you wish to indicate support, or have any queries or requests for more information, or want to order copies of the campaign postcards, please contact us preferably by email on either of the addresses below, or you can leave a message 24-hours a day via the CAMPAIGN HOTLINE contact number 020 8644 2965.

Yours sincerely

Max Littler, Chair UNISON SLaM Branch – Max.Littler@slam.nhs.uk
Dr John Lister, Director, London Health Emergency – health.emergency@virgin.net

NB: The Trust's full list of the proposed cutbacks can be found on the SLaM website www.slam.nhs.uk.

More details of the services at risk and the implications for service users and staff can be accessed from Friday June 30 via the London Health Emergency website at www.healthemergency.org.uk/slamcuts.html