

Letter from Enid Vincent 1

Our ref: EH/LL449

Harewood House

61 Glenburnie Road

London SW17 7DJ

13th April 1992

I am writing in reply to your letter to Virginia Bottomley dated 28th December 1991 which was received here at the end of January. I apologise for the delay in replying but you raised a number of issues which required a comprehensive investigation.

You are correct in saying that your medication was increased at the time of your admission to Bluebell Ward. The dose which you received was prescribed by a doctor in the light of your clinical condition at that time. There is nothing to suggest that your white blood cell count was affected but your medication was stopped temporarily once the sedation due to droperidol began to take effect. This is common practice, I am unable to comment on treatment given to other patients but Dr Gundy prescribes medication in accordance with the British National Formulary guidelines.

I am sorry that you were not happy with the standard of food provided. The quality of catering is regularly reviewed by the Mental Health Unit and comments as to how this might be improved are welcomed. There is a problem with maintaining adequate provisions in the cupboards. It is difficult to maintain a balance between allowing full access to provisions for all patients and rationing, to ensure supplies remain, which does involve less freedom of use. Staff have to use their discretion to ensure everyone has a fair share. I'm sorry if stocks were temporarily exhausted on the day you

arrived. Any food which remains after a meal is thrown away to comply with environmental legislation.

Bluebell Ward does have rules with regard to smoking and non smoking areas. These were agreed by the patients and staff in the light of the Health Authority's smoking policy. Staff are equally bound by the ward policy and if any of them are seen to flaunt it, this would be taken very seriously. As you are not specific about the incidents you describe the managers in the Unit are unable to take further action in respect of this now. The bathroom and utility room are locked at times when nursing staff believe that they are unable to give adequate supervision of these areas but if at any of these times a patient wishes to avail themselves of these facilities they would not be denied access unreasonably.

I understand your concern with regard to incontinence experienced by elderly patients on the ward. Staff do make every effort to maintain a high standard of hygiene and certainly are expected to change sheets as necessary. Without information about a specific incident the Managers have been unable to identify a specific instance that matched your description. With regard to the overall cleanliness of the ward there is a specification which the domestic staff follow and I understand that monitoring on Bluebell Ward shows they do this particularly well.

I am sorry that you perceived a lack of love and care on the ward as the staff there regularly demonstrate their commitment to a caring and sensitive approach to the treatment of their patients. I apologise if you feel the service was not offered to you in an acceptable manner.

I regret that overall your experience of admission to Bluebell Ward was such an unhappy one. I do however appreciate your bringing these concerns to my attention and believe that the Mental Health Unit will continue to keep the standards of care they provide under review.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Enid Vincent

Chairman

Wandsworth Health Authority

c.c. Virginia Bottomley