

PRESS RELEASE

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Manor Road drug clinic – the line must stop here

Councillor Craig Mackinlay called today for the addiction centre in Manor Road, Chatham to be relocated to a more appropriate location after an escalation of calls from local residents and businesses.

Councillor Mackinlay, also a Manor Road resident said “As a resident adversely affected by the activities of the clinic I have tried and pleaded using a softly-softly approach over many years with formerly the Medway PCT and now KCA, a charity contracted to provide substance misuse programmes by the local Primary Care Trust, to get the running of the clinic improved or relocated to more appropriate premises but the approach has failed. Nobody minds having a well managed service in close proximity but after having my latest emails unanswered by Kevin Molloy, Director of the Faversham based KCA it is clear that the management of the clinic is an utter shambles”.

Local residents have pleaded with health bosses over a period of 7 years to have the service relocated to a non-residential area. Despite promises and assurances that services would be dispersed, recent incidences at the clinic have left residents angry that no-one is listening to their calls for relief from the activities of service users at the clinic. In the last few weeks, despite being in the Chatham town centre alcohol control zone, residents have recorded uncontrolled drinking on the steps of the clinic and on their property, urination and worse in their gardens and surrounding areas and self-injecting by users before attending clinic. The detritus of their drug habit – discarded needles and drug paraphernalia in the area is cleared on a regular basis at additional cost to local taxpayers by the Community Wardens team of Medway Council.

The clinic has recently expanded its alcohol treatment into the evenings. With warmer weather the attendees have taken to the clinic’s garden with Mrs Stacey Dean, another long-suffering resident describing the activities in the garden as a barely controlled ‘party atmosphere’ that runs into the night. In an email to KCA, Councillor Mackinlay highlighted the litter and filthy state of the outside of the clinic in uncompromising terms “better suited to a war-zone rather than the centre of a British town.”

An obviously irate Cllr Mackinlay said “Drug rehabilitation is at the heart of taking the drug problem off of the streets and with it the crime, anti-social behaviour and prostitution associated with the culture of dependency but it is clear that the approach taken at Manor Road is not working with the same faces seen there for over 5 years. The centre needs to be relocated either into the grounds of Medway hospital where security staff can manage behaviour or be dispersed into smaller clinics around the towns.” KCA have themselves admitted that compared to other more modern clinics they manage in Kent, Manor Road is half the size and deals with twice as many patients as anywhere else.

Mr Dave Dean of Manor Road said “This clinic is a disgrace, it has no control over its users. On the many occasions that I have asked the staff to move their openly drinking and drug taking patients from my front garden I have been told to call the police and that it’s nothing to do with them. I have cleared up excrement from my property once too often.”

Local residents have repeatedly blamed the clinic for the endemic prostitution in the New Road area. Mike Smith, another local resident explained “The clinic is like a honey-pot, more like a drug users social club than a properly run clinic; we see many of the same patients on the street at night plying their trade as prostitutes, screaming and shouting throughout the night. I often think that some of the local prostitutes spend more hours in a day in Manor Road than I do as a resident.”

Cllr Mackinlay concludes “We need a serious national debate about solving drug addiction and drugs in general. What we are seeing in our dealings with the Primary Care Trust is a clear democratic deficit whereby the PCT is simply beyond reach and out of touch. The current service offered is failing users seeking to kick their habit and is certainly failing the wider community who have a right to the quiet enjoyment of their property and a decent private life.”

ENDS

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