



Eastern and Coastal Kent

Maternity Review - NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent and East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust

Briefing note for HOSC – February 2011

1. Context

- A joint review of Maternity services across east Kent by East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust and NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent is being undertaken to ensure the rising number of mothers-to-be continue to receive safe, high quality care and patient choice.
- In recognition of the changes to commissioning processes the review will be chaired by Dr. Chee Mah, GP clinical commissioner for women's health and Shadow Accountable Officer for emerging GP consortium Deal and Sandwich.
- The review team recognise there will be a lot of interest in this review and will undertake to keep stakeholders such as HOSC, GPs, local authorities and MPs very much a part of the planning process with regular updates and briefings
- At present there are two stand alone midwifery-led birth centres for low risk births in Dover and Canterbury. In addition there is one midwifery led unit at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford, and another due to be opened at the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate. In addition there are consultant-led obstetric units at Ashford and Margate and some home births.
- There have been two temporary closures of the Midwifery led units at Dover and subsequently Kent and Canterbury as a precautionary measure during an internal clinical investigation into an increase in neo natal demand, to allow senior midwifery staff to be reassigned to the William Harvey unit.

2. Joint approach to review of maternity services

- Reassurance, information and communication has been given to women and families affected by the temporary closure.
- This will be followed up with surveys / interviews to quantify if this has had an impact on their experiences of the service and care they received.
- EKHUFT and NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent are working on a joint approach to this review and have put forward an initial team each who will shortly meet to establish a joint project plan crucial to that will be a communications and engagement plan
- The Maternity Services Liaison Committee has agreed to advise and work with the review team on the engagement and any subsequent consultation around the Maternity review to ensure it is transparent and inclusive, listening to parents and citizens from across east Kent
- The review team will analyse all available evidence including engagement during maternity strategy recent maternity services

survey and information available through the EKHUFT hand-held patient experience tracker, compliments and complaints

- Both organisations are aware of the strategic implications of this review given the planned changes to maternity services in NHS West Kent and any emerging plans will give due care and consideration to the needs of our population and the delivery of services across Kent and Medway

3. Next steps

- As a critical part of our joint review we will share our draft communications and engagement plan with HOSC for comments
- We will also be happy to share our project plan in more detail at a future HOSC meeting and will ensure that there is representation from both trusts and clinical leads

Restriction of services provided at Midwifery Led Units within East Kent

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) closely monitors the safety of all its services, and maternity services are no exception.

In September 2010, it identified an increase in neonatal admissions to the William Harvey Hospital (WHH) neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) which had occurred between July and August 2010.

This increase was immediately reported to the Trust's Executive Team as part of the Trust's routine safety processes. A decision was made to investigate this increase and, as a precautionary measure, to enhance staffing levels at the high risk obstetric unit at WHH while the investigation was being carried out.

To achieve the enhanced staffing levels, births within the Dover birthing centre at Buckland Hospital were temporarily stopped and some midwives were posted to WHH. All other services provided at the centre continued as normal.

EKHUFT reported the situation to our commissioners, the Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT (ECKPCT) and to the South East Coast Strategic Health Authority in September 2010.

An internal investigation with external support from both ECKPCT and a neighboring Trust was carried out and reported to the Board of Directors on 22nd December 2010.

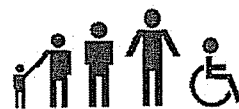
The investigation was unable to pinpoint a specific cause for the increase in admissions to NICU which had been identified in the two month period. However, it considered a significant increase in the birth rate combined with skill mix at the high risk obstetric unit at WHH at the time may have been contributing factors.

The number of neonatal admissions to NICU had normalized since the staffing levels at the high risk obstetric unit at WHH were increased and so the Board of Directors took the decision that a comprehensive review into present and future provision of maternity services in East Kent be initiated and pending the results of this review these staffing levels would need to be maintained.

In the interests of equity, and taking account of social factors the following decisions were made on 22nd December 2010.

1. To reopen the Dover Birthing Centre at the Buckland Hospital.
2. To temporarily close the Canterbury Birth Centre to enable the enhanced midwifery staff levels at WHH while retaining day time services on the MLU.

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Putting patients first

3. To engage with the PCT and local health economy in longer term strategic decisions on maternity services.
4. Not to open the MLU at QEQM until the review had established exactly what staffing mix would be needed to maintain patient safety.
5. This decision was immediately transmitted to ECKPCT and a meeting planned for 25th January 2011 to take forward public involvement in this difficult area.

