

Progress report – maternity review in east Kent.

Background

In January 2011 the PCT and East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) instigated a maternity review to ensure east Kent would continue to deliver safe, equitable maternity services. The review was triggered by the increasing birth rate and changes to the pattern of patient choice leading to more than 50 per cent of all babies being delivered in 2009/10 at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. To alleviate the pressure on services at Ashford there was a temporary cessation of births at Dover midwife led centre which re-opened in January, when Canterbury Midwife Led Unit was temporarily suspended for births and some of the experienced midwives transferred to Ashford. To prevent further confusion and risk to parents the suspension of births at Canterbury continues until the end of the review.

The joint Maternity Review steering group is chaired by Dr Sarah Montgomery (clinical lead and GP from Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group). One of the main objectives of the steering group has been to:

- Enable a robust two-way dialogue between the partner organisations and their staff, patients, GPs, stakeholders and the local population, ensuring a transparent and well informed debate about the issues faced. It is important that any decisions taken are informed by both local opinion and clinical evidence that meets the requirements of sections 242 and 244 of the Health Act.

Engagement in the planning and development of the maternity review

From April to August 2011 there was extensive engagement with stakeholders to ensure their views were able to influence the review. GP clinical leads were part of the review steering group and cascaded information to their colleagues. GPs have also received ongoing briefings and progress reports through the east Kent commissioning group, the federation of east Kent CCG leads, and the Local Medical Committee. Each east Kent Clinical Commissioning Group gave its approval to the final three options consulted upon, and their support for option one as the stated preferred option. Other interested stakeholders such as MPS, the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and local district councils have also been regularly informed of the review: its purpose, progress and ultimate consultation.

Throughout the review the NHS has worked closely with the local Maternity Services Liaison Committee relying on its feedback to shape the engagement and consultation process, and its support in encouraging parents across east Kent to become involved and respond through their networks of ante natal classes, mother and baby groups and their Facebook page.

The NHS has also worked closely with contacts in children's centres and Sure Start centres or Young Active Parents groups, to ensure conversations are had with parents in settings where they are comfortable. From April to May 2011 NHS staff

interviewed 94 parents and held a focus group with teenage parents about their recent experience of maternity services, asking where they felt the service could be improved and what their priorities were for maternity care were. This helped focus the review and the final consultation on changes to services for birth only, leaving the majority of antenatal and postnatal care as it is currently delivered by teams of community midwives across east Kent including at Dover and Canterbury.

Staff and parents using maternity services were also surveyed for their views,

- 231 parents completed a patient experience survey based upon the national Care Quality Commission survey
- Staff held regular discussions with senior staff in the early stages of the review and 94 staff from a range of clinical roles completed an online survey.

Community midwife	24
Midwife at acute trust	42
Consultant	5
GP	1
Maternity Care Assistant	9

Both the PCT cluster and EKHUFT have used their established contact with Foundation Trust members and governors, the Health Matters Reference Group, Kent LINK and other voluntary and community sector organisations to inform and involve people in the review, by:

- running an online survey,
- holding a series of community roadshows
- visiting a host of family friendly events in the summer of 2011 to canvas views on which priorities should influence the decision on maternity services.

Throughout the review the NHS has taken care to reach those communities of need who have expressed an interest in the review including young adults, learning disability groups, fathers' groups, community centres with many eastern European parents, and Nepalese parents. These were communities who had expressed an interest in being actively involved when we contacted them initially. The PCT has offered to meet all specific communications needs and attend any meetings where it was felt that a face to face discussion would assist their involvement in the process.

The review has also been featured in several issues of 'Your Health' magazine 30,000 copies of which are distributed through GP practices, hospital waiting areas, supermarkets, libraries and community centres, as well as in hairdressers etc to ensure the wider community was aware of and able to comment on the maternity review.

The local media have also been regularly updated with press releases and news statements, and both the broadcasting media and local newspapers have featured the review. The Kent Messenger ran a campaign in its Canterbury papers and through an online survey to oppose the cessation of births at Canterbury birth centre. Their online petition with 450 names was presented to the PCT on 19 October 2011. From 9 June 2011 – 13 Oct 2011 there were 68 stories in the papers including 20 letters.

Over 25 of the stories appeared in more than 1 paper and the majority of the letters were printed in more than one paper as well. Most of the coverage was in the Kentish

Gazette series which includes Kentish Gazette Canterbury and district, Whitstable Gazette, Herne Bay Gazette and Faversham news.

Across these differing means of engagement approximately 1,000 people have been directly involved in the early development of the maternity review. They have influenced the plans, the review's focus and the options developed, as well as the criteria for the final decisions being made.

The Strategic Health Authority and the National Clinical Audit Team have also reviewed the evidence and provided strategic assurance on the plans, as have both Boards of the Trust and PCT.

Finally, in August a working group from Kent HOSC worked with the PCT and EKHUFT to advise on a suitable consultation plan. The formal 14-week consultation on three options for the future of maternity services in east Kent ran from 14 October 2011 to 20 January 2012.

Consultation on maternity review

During the consultation a range of methods have been used to promote the consultation process:

- advertisements in KM messenger newspaper across east Kent,
- radio advertisements on Heart FM
- interviews on BBC Radio Kent
- news items on BBC South East and Meridian
- updates in the Kent LINK bulletin and newsletter
- 1,684 emails and 278 postal copies of the consultation document were sent to a range of local organizations from GP practices through to the voluntary and community sectors and the PCT's virtual panel.
- Posters and documents in GP surgeries, libraries, children's centres and Sure Start buildings and shopping centres.
- Online information being available at:
<http://www.easternandcoastalkent.nhs.uk/get-involved/consultations-and-surveys/maternity-services-review/> with suitable links on the Trust's website and through social media i.e. Facebook and Twitter.
- 2,000 full consultation documents and 10,000 summary documents were distributed to GP practices, hospital waiting areas, libraries, community centres, children's centres, Sure Start centres and various parent classes and groups running across east Kent.
- Your Health magazine had a double page spread featuring the review and consultation and 30,000 copies have been distributed across east Kent.
- The citizen engagement team has personally visited more than 45 parents groups including baby massage, breastfeeding, parent and toddlers, messy play, dads' groups etc being run at children's centres, community venues or in Sure Start centres to raise awareness, provide information, answer any questions and encourage parents and organisations to respond to the consultation.
- An online email address and telephone number have also been given so that people could request additional information, ask questions or request copies of the consultation document.

- The consultation documents have been available in various formats including: easy read, large print, Polish, and Nepalese. Translators have assisted at community groups where the participants did not speak English as a first language.

There has also been a series of 10 public meetings held at times recommended by parents during the early engagement. These were advertised as part of the whole consultation as detailed above.

At these two-hour public roadshows a panel of clinicians and commissioners has presented information on the review, the reasons why it was necessary, the outcome expected of the review, the steps taken during the review, the options arrived at and what would happen following the review. There has then been an hour of open question and answer session sometimes followed by round table discussions depending on the numbers present. The numbers attending these events has not been very high, partly due to consultation fatigue, and partly due to the proactive engagement and outreach programme to parent groups across east Kent that meant many people have felt able to contribute directly both before and during the review without specifically attending the public meetings.

As expected the attendance has been highest in the four events in Canterbury and Dover where a mixed audience of councillors, campaigners, parents and interested citizens have had constructive discussions about the proposed options and also heard parents' experience of the service, their praise and their concerns.

Next steps

The responses have all been logged during the review, from phone calls and email enquiries for further information, to briefings provided to Dover and Canterbury Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the visits to children's centres. 251 online surveys have been submitted, 205 paper surveys have been received and several stakeholders have sent in written submissions.

These have all been sent to independent researchers from Greenwich University who will collate and analyse all the information and report to the joint Maternity Review Steering Group in March. The Group will consider this alongside all the evidence gathered during the review and make a final recommendation to the Boards of EKHUFT and the PCT in late March.

The Boards will then take the final decision whether to accept their recommendations, and these outcomes will be reported to Kent HOSC in April.