

Item: East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust - Maternity Services

By: Kay Goldsmith, Scrutiny Research Officer

To: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 28 January 2025

Subject: East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust - Maternity Services

Summary: This report invites the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the information provided by East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT). It provides background information which may prove useful to Members.

1) Introduction

- a) On 19 October 2022 Dr Kirkup's report "Reading the Signals" was published by the Government. The report followed an investigation into maternity and neonatal services at the Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital (QEQM) in Margate and the William Harvey Hospital (WHH) in Ashford, between 2009 and 2020. Some 202 cases were assessed by the panel, led by Dr Bill Kirkup.
- b) The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has rated maternity services in both [QEQM](#) and [WHH](#) as inadequate (as at May 2023). The overall rating for the hospitals remains "requires improvement".

2) Previous scrutiny

- a) HOSC has scrutinised maternity services at East Kent hospitals regularly over the last five years. The last update was in December 2023, where it was noted:
 - i) There was a national target to reduce stillbirth and neo-natal deaths by 50% by 2025 (from 2010 figures). East Kent had a 1.7 stillbirth rate per 1000 and 0.87 neonatal deaths per 1000.
 - ii) More work was needed to understand the barriers to access for black and minority users of maternity services.
 - iii) William Harvey Hospital had welcomed student midwives from the University of Surrey, and were working to re-establish links with Canterbury Christchurch University.
 - iv) A patient experience midwife had been recruited and every woman who used the maternity service would get a phone call 6-weeks after the birth to share their experiences. Support was in place for staff as well. The most recent Your Voice is Heard data showed that 92% of women would return

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to East Kent services and there would be a follow-up with those dissatisfied.

- v) There had been a full review of governance across the department.
- b) Representatives from the Trust have been invited to attend today's meeting to provide an update on the performance of their maternity services.

3) Estates

- a) The Kirkup report included references to the Trust's infrastructure and its dated estate, some of which failed to meet recommended guidance.
- b) The poor state of the buildings has been scrutinised by HOSC. At a meeting in November 2022, the Trust explained how they were investing £1.6m in maternity services at WHH and QEQM and £1.7m in the Special Care Baby Unit at QEQM. They were seeking additional investment to expand and refurbish both units, including for a second obstetric theatre at QEQM hospital and to increase the number and size of rooms available for women and their families.
- c) The Chair of HOSC wrote to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in October 2023, highlighting the Committee's support for additional investment to improve the maternity units.

4) Recommendation

- a) RECOMMENDED that the Committee consider and note the report.

Background Documents

Kent County Council (2020) '*Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (05/03/20)*', <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=112&MId=8286&Ver=4>

Kent County Council (2020) '*Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (22/07/20)*', <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=112&MId=8496&Ver=4>

Kent County Council (2020) '*Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (17/09/20)*', <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=112&MId=8497&Ver=4>

Kent County Council (2022) '*Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (26/01/22)*', <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=112&MId=8761&Ver=4>

Kent County Council (2022) '*Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (30/11/22)*', <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=112&MId=9048&Ver=4>

Kent County Council (2023) '*Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (10/05/23)*', <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=112&MId=9053&Ver=4>

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Kent County Council (2023) '*Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (7/12/23)*',
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=112&MId=9319&Ver=4>

Care Quality Commission, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust,
Overview and CQC inspection ratings, <https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RVV>

Reading the signals - Maternity and neonatal services in East Kent – the Report of
the Independent Investigation (2022),
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maternity-and-neonatal-services-in-east-kent-reading-the-signals-report>

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