

Item 6: East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust - Maternity Services

By: Kay Goldsmith, Scrutiny Research Officer

To: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 7 December 2023

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) Representatives from the Trust have been invited to attend today's meeting to provide an update on improvements made since publication of the Report one year ago.

2) Previous scrutiny

- a) HOSC has scrutinised maternity services at East Kent hospitals 6 times since March 2020. The Trust last attended HOSC with a maternity update on 10 May 2023, setting out the improvement work and highlighting activities undertaken. Key points from the discussion were:
 - i) A culture and leadership programme had been launched at the Trust, developed by The King's Fund.
 - ii) The Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) midwife training program at both William Harvey and QEQM had been withdrawn.
 - iii) Two senior midwives had been appointed to undertake the "Your Voice is Heard" engagement initiative.
 - iv) A new bereavement pathway offered 7-day support to families.
- b) The Chair asked for examples of work that had been achieved because of the Your Voice is Heard program in the next committee update report.
- c) On 26 May 2023, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published inspection reports for maternity services in both [QEQM](#) and [WHH](#). Both units were rated inadequate (the overall rating for the hospitals remained "requires improvement").

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) During an informal briefing about maternity services for the Committee on 18 October 2023, the Chair offered to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to highlight the Committee's support for additional investment to improve the maternity units. A copy of the letter is attached as Appendix A.¹

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>

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>

¹ A letter was sent to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Steve Barclay MP, on Friday 10 November 2023. On Monday 13 November, Victoria Atkins MP became the new Secretary of State, and therefore a copy of the letter was sent to her on 14 November.

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