

High Weald Lewes Havens CCG update report on maternity services in the High Weald

On 10 November 2015, in a joint statement, High Weald Lewes Havens (HWLH) CCG, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (MTW) announced they had reached agreement in principle to move the management of maternity services provided within the High Weald area, including those at Crowborough Birthing Centre (CBC), to MTW; to help provide a more seamless maternity service for women in that area.

This agreement reflects the on-going commitment to improving local maternity services, as started under the Better Beginnings programme in 2013/14. It provides a positive direction of travel for the service, and an opportunity to streamline the service provision, and responds to feedback received from the High Weald population during the Better Beginnings consultation.

The exact details around this transfer including workforce and timing are being worked on together by all parties and will be finalised and agreed in the coming weeks.

The East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) recommendations from the Better Beginnings Programme that related to the High Weald are set out below and were accepted in full by the CCG.

- *Women should have the opportunity to give birth at the Crowborough Birthing Centre (CBC) Midwife-Led Unit (MLU), with the option to seamlessly transfer to Tunbridge Wells Hospital (TWH) at Pembury, should an obstetric service be required or desired;*
- *Administrative pathway barriers, such as formats of patient notes and booking arrangements operating differently in different trusts, must be resolved;*
- *Activity levels at CBC should be improved pending longer term management decisions, such as reinstating obstetric scanning services at CBC; and*
- *The 'emergency transfer link' from the High Weald and CBC to TWH must be strengthened as reflected in existing practice for women in distressed labour at CBC.*

As previously reported to HOSC the CCG established a Midwifery Care Pathways Working Group comprised of clinicians from ESHT, MTW, Brighton and Sussex

University Hospitals NHS Trust (BSUH), and patient representatives. The group was chaired by the CCG Governing Body lead Dr David Roche. This group was established in response to the HOSC's recommendation to urgently review the maternity care pathway in High Weald. This working group identified and agreed a model pathway for maternity in the High Weald and since then HWLH CCG has continued to work with local Trusts to explore the best means to deliver that pathway and to secure the improvements identified in the HOSC recommendations. The CCG welcomes the approach and the positive engagement from ESHT and MTW colleagues that has enabled this agreement in principle to be reached, an agreement that will support a step-change to maternity pathways in the High Weald and towards fully addressing the HOSC's recommendations.

Prior to reaching this agreement the CCG undertook a comprehensive review of the provider market and the possible options to deliver the model of care developed by the Better Beginnings Midwifery Care Pathways Working Group. The CCG has undertaken soft market testing to identify suitable and willing providers; and having determined the clinical and operational connections necessary between the Crowborough Birthing Centre and the nearest acute obstetric unit which is the Tunbridge Wells Hospital at Pembury, MTW is uniquely and exclusively placed to provide the services. This underpins the CCG decision to pursue an agreed transfer of services as described above.

Robust patient and public engagement was undertaken during the Better Beginnings Consultation, which reviewed Maternity services across East Sussex; including those for women in the High Weald. Engagement has been on-going and further engagement will be undertaken to support the managed transfer process.

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