

Why we need to change and the benefits of making changes now

What we are proposing to change:

- We are proposing to transfer specialist children's inpatient and maternity services from The Friarage Hospital to other larger hospitals such as Middlesbrough, Darlington, Harrogate and York.
- Children's outpatient and midwifery services will remain at The Friarage Hospital.
- There are options for investing in additional services at The Friarage Hospital including a children's assessment unit and enhanced community services.

Why we need to change

- Our communities, the way we live, the funding of public services and the type of healthcare we all want are constantly changing. Yet the way we provide health services has largely stayed the same for 30-40 years.
- The safety and clinical quality of services is our number one priority – both now and to safeguard standards for the future.
- The safest way to deliver healthcare is to make sure that the right professional, with the right skills, is in the right place whenever patients need them.
- We cannot allow a situation where the quality of services at your local hospital depends on what day of the week it is, what time of day or night it is, or which staff are available.
- It is important that the most senior, experienced and specialist staff are on hand at the hospital 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the patients who need them.

- To achieve this we need to concentrate teams of highly trained professionals at fewer hospitals to make services safer and better.
- At the same time, we need to provide the right balance of services in the community and closer to patients' homes. In particular, provide preventative and supportive care to patients so they are healthier and less likely to be admitted to hospital.

These issues mean that we need to make changes to some children's and maternity services at The Friarage Hospital because:

There is a shortage of skilled staff to continue to run the children's services safely.

Children's and maternity services are linked, and cannot be run safely independently of each other.

Fewer children are being treated as in-patients there:

- Around 5 children a day are admitted to the children's wards.
- Less than a third of the beds in the children's wards are used overnight.

Fewer babies are being born there:

- Around three or four babies are born a day which equates to 1,260 babies a year. This figure is not likely to increase in the next few years and means The Friarage Hospital has one of the smallest maternity units in the country.
- Whilst the overall numbers of births will remain the same, more and more mothers are needing specialist care during their deliveries - a figure which is likely to increase over the next few years.
- Around a third of women experience "low risk" pregnancies which do not need the same levels of specialist consultant care.

Changing the way health services are organised is not easy. We appreciate that women, families and local people are understandably concerned when they hear of services changing close to them.

We know that you are worried about travelling further to hospital, and that whilst doctors, nurses and healthcare managers are convinced these are the right changes to make, many patients are not as convinced.

Benefits of these changes for patients

- All patients can experience the same high standard of care, from the right healthcare professional with the right skills and experience to support their needs.
- Improving maternity and children's care will save lives. Centralising specialist services in our area means better outcomes for patients as Specialists increase their skills and knowledge by dealing with larger numbers of similar complex cases.
- It is easier to attract and retain skilled staff if they are able to work in specialist centres, so we will avoid the problems of having to temporarily close services or divert patients at the last minute when staffing levels drop or where we have long-term vacancies which we cannot attract new staff into.
- Specialist services will safeguard the quality of care patients will receive today – and in the future.
- Taking action will avoid the problem developing into a crisis in the future.



This factsheet has been produced as part of the public consultation on our proposal for maternity and children's services at The Friarage Hospital in Northallerton.