

MAIN REPORT**Introduction**

1. This is the Interim Report of the Women and Children Task and Finish Review Group to consider the Women and Children workstream of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Clinical Strategy.

Membership of the Review Group

2. Councillor Newall (Chair) and Councillor Donoghue.

Acknowledgements

3. The Task and Finish Review Group acknowledges the support and assistance provided in the course of their investigation and would like to place on record their thanks to the following :-

County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust – Mr Bob Aitken, Consultant Obstetrician, Tracy Hardy, Assistant Chief Officer, Ann Holt, Head of Midwifery and Cath Vasey, Head of Children and Families and Abbie Metcalfe, Democratic Officer.

Methods of Investigation

4. The Task and Finish Group has met on two occasions and carried out two site visits, the notes of each meeting have been regularly reported to the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.
5. At the first meeting, Members received an informative and detailed overview of the Women and Children workstream and the following conclusions were made:-
 - The main focus of the Group will be to gather evidence to support the Trust in maintaining Women and Children's Services across two acute sites in County Durham and Darlington.
 - The Group will also explore concerns about changes to commissioning arrangements and the potential of the current services/pathway fragmenting.
 - The Group will undertake site visits and follow a journey of an average child's pathway from birth to five years and an example of high risk women, premature baby and the specialist support and services available.

6. Members have since met with Officers and received information in respect of the development of the Pregnancy Assessment Unit and the Healthy Child Programme Pathway.
7. Members have also visited the Paediatrics Ward at Darlington Memorial Hospital.
8. Members have recently met with Mr Bob Aitken and Anne Holt at Darlington Memorial Hospital to discuss in detail the opportunities to extend the operating hours of the Pregnancy Assessment Unit to take the pressure off the Labour Ward, the potential investment opportunities to update the maternity facilities at Darlington Memorial Hospital, the impact of the impending consultation on the maternity services at the Friarage Hospital, the benefits of retaining two Maternity Units across both Acute Hospitals and the impact of the Quality Legacy Project.

The Friarage Hospital

9. As part of the work of this Group has been involved the impending consultation in respect of the proposed consultation of a Midwife Led Maternity Unit and Paediatric Short Stay Assessment Unit at The Friarage Hospital.
10. Councillor Newall, as Chair, has met with Officers and Members from Richmondshire District Council and North Yorkshire County Councils.
11. The Tees Valley Health Scrutiny Joint Committee has also received a briefing from representatives from South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust considering the implications of a decision being made.
12. However, it has now been announced that the official public consultation has been put on hold. The Board of NHS North Yorkshire and York has confirmed that it would not include an option to retain a Consultant Led Paediatric and Maternity Services at The Friarage Hospital in the formal consultation. This is because local GPs, Clinicians at South Tees NHS Hospital Trust and the Department of Health's National Clinical Advisory Team all agreed that this option was not clinically sustainable due to ongoing staffing and recruitment issues.
13. We will be monitoring on this issue and will respond to the public consultation. We need to ensure that as a result of any decision that Darlington Memorial Hospital is able to cope with additional number of births and has the capacity. We are reassured that currently there is capacity to take on an estimated additional 300 expectant mothers if the decision is taken to reduce the services provided at The Friarage Hospital.

Conclusions to date

14. Members welcomed the opportunity to meet with Officers and receive an overview of the Women and Children workstream.
15. Members believe the Pregnancy Assessment Unit is key to reducing pressure on the Labour Wards and will be more successful if hours opening hours were extended.
16. Members are pleased that the integrated health and social care children's team are working well in Darlington and are keen that the service does not become defragmented as things change within the world of the NHS over the coming months.
17. Members strongly believe that integrated children's services are crucial to delivering efficiencies and creating savings and ultimately improving the quality of the service.
18. Members are satisfied that at this time Darlington Memorial Hospital does have additional capacity to cope with an additional 300 births per year if the services at the Friarage Hospital were to change.
19. Following the work this Group has undertaken in respect of the provision of Women and Children, it has become apparent that it would be beneficial to consider amalgamating the work of this Group with the expected work to commence in relation to the Friarage Hospital Consultation.

Recommendations

20. That the Committee respond to the consultation in respect of a Midwife Led Maternity Unit and Paediatric Short Stay Assessment Unit at The Friarage Hospital.
21. That the Women and Children Task and Finish Review Group becomes The Friarage Task and Finish Review Group to respond to the impending consultation in respect of the Friarage Hospital and that all Members of the Scrutiny Committee be invited to attend the meetings.

Women and Children Task and Finish Review Group