

MATERNITY SERVICES

HEFT Press statement 14th January 2010
Statement

As provider and commissioners of services, Heart of England Foundation Trust, Solihull Care Trust and NHS Birmingham East and North PCT have a duty to make sure that all services are as safe as possible and to meet national guidelines and best practice. Doctors, midwives and nurses, together with external agencies, including the South West Neonatal Network responsible for advising on standards of newborn services across the region, are advising that the current maternity service at Solihull Hospital cannot continue as it is at the moment as it does not meet contemporary best practice standards particularly for resuscitation of newborns. While everything seems to be going well, it can seem unnecessary to make any changes. We all know that it is easy to make changes after an incident has occurred. What is more challenging but is the right thing to do is to make changes to ensure the service is as safe as possible to prevent a mother and baby being subject to any unnecessary risk.

All three organisations fully support the need to hold a full and open dialogue with the residents of Solihull on any proposed permanent changes to the maternity services at Solihull Hospital. The legal process for this stipulates that this has to be lead by the primary care trust and Solihull Care Trust and NHS Birmingham East and North PCT are working together on this process which is unlikely to take place until later this year. Only once the outcome of the consultation is known will any permanent changes be made to the service at Solihull Hospital.

In the interim and as a temporary change purely to make the service as safe as possible, Solihull Hospital will continue to provide midwifery services for low risk births through a midwifery-led unit. More complicated births will be booked at Heartlands Hospital, Good Hope Hospital or another nearby hospital. This decision has been taken on the advice of specialist clinical staff and several external groups who have encouraged the three organisations to take early action to safeguard mothers and babies.

The Hospital's Chief Executive Dr Mark Goldman said: "We need to make services as safe as possible for our patients. Temporary measures have managed to keep Solihull Hospital's maternity service safe. We cannot maintain these temporary measures after the spring. We are determined to ensure that until a full and open dialogue with Solihull residents can take place, a service that puts the safety of mothers and babies first is continued at Solihull. Once the outcome of the full consultation process is known, the Trust will stand by and act on the conclusions and recommendations."

Solihull Care Trust's Chief Executive Claire Molloy said: "The Care Trust acknowledges the challenges that the Heart of England Foundation Trust faces in continuing to provide maternity services at Solihull Hospital. Our primary aim is to achieve the best possible balance between safe and local services that will ensure the wellbeing and safety of women and their babies.

“It is unfortunate that change is to take place before a formal consultation had taken place. However, it is important to remember that these are interim changes and the Care Trust is committed to working with local people - particularly women and their families - so that they have an input in developing a long term solution for maternity care in Solihull.”

NHS Birmingham East and North Chief Executive Sophia Christie said: “We fully appreciate that there is a lot of very strong feeling about the provision of maternity services. I would like to underline the fact that we have taken this decision early in order to keep our mothers and babies safe in the coming months. No decision will be made on a permanent solution outside of a public consultation.”