

Elaine Baylis
Interim Chair
United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust

County Offices
Newland
Lincoln
LN1 1YL

21 May 2018

Dear Elaine

CHILDREN'S SERVICES – PILGRIM HOSPITAL

I would like to put on record the Committee's gratitude to all the staff who have continued and are continuing to provide women's and children's services at Pilgrim Hospital in these increasingly difficult circumstances. The Committee appreciates their commitment over the last few months, particularly their efforts in seeking to maintain a safe service at the Hospital.

I would also like to thank Jan Sobieraj and his senior colleagues for attending the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire on 16 May 2018. The Committee agreed that I should set out its comments, which I request are passed on to the Board of ULHT, when it makes its decision on the future options for children's services.

(1) Recruitment of Staff

The Committee has been presented with extensive evidence on the efforts made to recruit middle grade paediatric doctors. This includes the use of a specialist recruitment consultant to assist overseas applicants with visa documentation. The Committee would like to see the Trust's recruitment efforts continue, as it became clear during the presentation to the Committee that the Trust's ideal option is to continue to provide existing services as per Option 1. The Committee would like to see the Trust continue to gain intelligence as to the barriers for staff taking up positions within the Trust, and work to overcome these.

(2) Hospital Transfer Arrangements

Options 2 and 3 refer to between one and two children per day being transferred by ambulance from Pilgrim to Lincoln County for an in-patient bed. The Committee was advised of the further work on the possibility of the Trust

commissioning a separate ambulance service to make these inter-hospital transfers, as EMAS would be unlikely to offer this service in every instance. Furthermore, there may be instances where an air ambulance is required because of patient need. I urge the Trust Board to fully explore and cost these transfer arrangements, including any impacts on EMAS and the Air Ambulance Service, before making a decision on any of these two options.

(3) Option 3 and Patient Choice

The report to the Board stated that as a result of Option 3 approximately 650 each year mothers would give birth at Lincoln County instead of Pilgrim; and approximately 1,000 mothers each year would give birth at another out-of-county hospital; with 300 'low-risk' mothers giving birth at a midwifery-led unit at Pilgrim Hospital. As 1,650 mothers would be directed away from Pilgrim Hospital, this impact would be significant. It was confirmed to the Committee that choices of a home-birth, midwifery-led unit or consultant-led unit should be offered as part of the principle of patient choice. However, for 1,650 mothers the choice of a consultant-led birth at their preferred local hospital – Pilgrim Hospital - would be removed, if Option 3 were to be adopted. Furthermore, 1,650 mothers would then be expected to travel much further to give birth.

(4) Parent and Family Transport

In addition to the patient transfer arrangements for Options 2 and 3, there are further impacts on parents and families. Even if parents or families have access to a car, a journey from the Boston or Skegness area to Lincoln County Hospital invariably exceeds one hour. In the worst case, where families do not have access to a car, a journey by public transport would be impossible, unless overnight accommodation is made available. There are also additional travel costs, whatever form of transport is used. I urge that all these travel impacts should be fully explored by the Trust Board before it makes a decision.

(5) Impacts on Staff

The Committee notes that the concerns over patient safety were initially highlighted by the paediatricians themselves and the report to the Trust Board included a short section on the impacts on staff for each of the options. The Committee was advised that the Trust's retention rates are good, but a concern is that changes to working arrangements could impact on the professional development and job satisfaction of staff, and as a result they could seek alternative employment, thus making a difficult situation worse. I would urge the Board to take account of this observation.

(6) Learning from Others

Some of the challenges for children's services at Pilgrim may be unique to Lincolnshire, but the Committee would like to see if the Trust could benefit from any learning in other areas, where an option to remove a service has been implemented, in terms of impacts on patients and their families, staff and other health services, such as EMAS.

(7) Fear in the Community

A recurring theme at the Health Scrutiny Committee was the level of fear in Boston, Skegness and the neighbouring communities. People are afraid of what is happening and what is going to happen. The only way to address is for the Trust to provide continual reassurance of their plans to the local communities.

(8) Decision Making and Availability of Information

The Committee notes that two external reports have been separately commissioned, one from the East of England Clinical Senate; and the other from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. The Committee also notes the decision of the Trust Board on 27 April 2018 to seek more detail on each of the four options. As the Trust Board considers all this information, I would like to make reference to a statement in the presentation to the Committee on 16 May on the need to avoid removing 'one hazard' and replacing it with another. The Committee would not wish to see Trust Board's decision, which will be based on a safety rationale, create other hazards and risks for patients and staff.

The Committee also decided to give further consideration to this matter at its next meeting on 13 June.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Carl Macey
Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire

cc. Lincolnshire Members of Parliament:

Victoria Atkins, MP

Nick Boles Esq, MP

John Hayes Esq, MP

Dr Caroline Johnson, MP

Karen Lee, MP

Sir Edward Leigh, MP

Matt Warman, MP

Jan Sobieraj, Chief Executive, United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust