

Dear colleague,

Welcome to the latest briefing on ULHT's efforts to maintain safe children's and maternity services at Pilgrim Hospital, Boston.

Paediatric services latest

Since our last newsletter, work has been ongoing to move towards our interim service model for children's and maternity services at Pilgrim hospital.

To recap, over the past few months we have been working to maintain children's services at Pilgrim hospital where possible, despite a severe shortage of middle grade doctors putting the safety of the service at risk.

We have made extensive recruitment efforts and have managed to secure an additional two middle grade doctors, as well as having a number of other potential additional new starters in the pipeline.

In spite of this improved staffing picture, we still don't have enough paediatric doctors and nurses to provide emergency and non-urgent care on both Lincoln and Pilgrim children's wards 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Therefore, we developed an interim model for the service which sees us able to continue providing the majority of children's and maternity services at the hospital.

Over the last four weeks we have been populating rotas and planning and testing care pathways for women and children who use Pilgrim hospital, to ensure that when the new model is brought in it is safe for our patients.

The model will start during August and we anticipate it will operate for a few months. At present, we are unable to confirm the exact date of the change, as we have managed to staff the existing rotas safely for a couple more weeks, whilst we finalise plans for the interim model to ensure it is safe for our patients.

The date of the change will be communicated widely when it is finalised.

Interim model- what's happening

The model will see:

- Outpatient clinics continuing at Pilgrim.
- Pilgrim managing only low-risk neonatal births
- A 24 hour paediatric assessment and observation unit (PAU) established on the children's ward at Pilgrim, offering restricted periods of observation.
- Children's day surgery remaining at Pilgrim.
- Consultant-led maternity birthing unit remaining at Pilgrim.

In excess of 98% of current activity will remain at Pilgrim hospital. We anticipate that there will be between six and 10 pregnant women, babies and children transferred to

other sites for care per week. These will be small numbers of babies, ladies who may have 'high risk' births and children needing more than 12 hours observation.

We understand that this change will be of concern to our families and public, but we have done our best to find a way to retain as many services at the site as possible.

Our advice to all patients would be, if you or your child is ill to call 111, visit your GP or attend A&E if necessary, where you will be assessed and the appropriate care plan decided upon.

Pregnant women and carers with regular attending children should carry on accessing the hospital as usual, if anything needs to change this will be included in care plans.

Recognising the pressures on East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) and the concerns of patients, we are planning to buy-in two private ambulances 24 hours a day exclusively for the transfer of affected patients within the maternity and children's services.

In addition, we would like to reassure our public that we have comprehensively reviewed our capacity within paediatric and maternity services at Lincoln, and are confident that we will be able to cope with the increased demand at Lincoln as patients are transferred.

To address some recent rumours, we'd like to be clear that the interim model is the only change taking place within children's and maternity services at Pilgrim hospital. To date, no appointments or staff have been shifted away from Pilgrim.

Recruitment efforts

We have made extensive efforts to recruit to the service, with the aim of restoring a full service for our patients as soon as possible, including:

- A rolling a NHS jobs advert for medical staff.
- Recruitment to medical agency staff.
- International recruitment, from which we anticipate one doctor will start in August, another in October and another is agreeing a starting date. These doctors will undergo a comprehensive assessment package of development prior to taking up full duties.
- Further international recruitment is taking place over the next two months.
- Recruited two additional consultants to help cover the service.

We have worked closely with Health Education England (HEE) to reassure them about the safety of the service so that junior doctors can remain working at Pilgrim. We have reached an agreement with them that junior doctors coming into the service on the August rotation will work at Pilgrim Monday to Friday daytimes, but not in evenings and at weekends.

What now?

We are continuing our efforts to recruit paediatricians and nurses as we would like to see a full paediatric and neonatal service resumed at the hospital as soon as possible.

We also continue to work alongside our partners and stakeholders as part of the Lincolnshire Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) to develop a long-term model for women's and children's services across the county for the future.

A further update on progress against our interim model will be made at our Trust Board meeting on Friday 27 July.

We are listening

We are keen to hear from you, help us shape the future of our childrens service. As we manage our current staffing situation, we need to understand what matters to our patients, where you have concerns and what we can do to mitigate any concerns and risks. In the interests of ensuring our service planning takes into account this feedback, we have arranged a series of paediatric engagement events taking place over the next three months.

Here, you will find out more about our developing plans for the service, ask questions and help to inform the emerging service models.

Please come along, everyone is welcome. All meetings will be held in the committee room in the postgraduate medical education centre at Pilgrim Hospital, Boston:

Tuesday 31 July 12.30pm – 2pm
Monday 20 August 6pm – 8pm
Monday 17 September 3pm – 5pm

If you intend to come along, please RSVP to members@ulh.nhs.uk or ring 01522 572301.

Best wishes

Jan