

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

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.

After an initial transition phase, the interim model for delivery of women's and children's services at Pilgrim was introduced on Monday 6 August 2018 and has been running smoothly.

We introduced the new interim service model to ensure that the majority of children's services could be safely maintained at Pilgrim.

This new model is now fully up and running and in the first three weeks a total of 26 paediatric medical and surgical patients have had to be transferred elsewhere for care, all transferred using the private paramedic-equipped ambulances we have bought in for the purpose. No neonatal or maternity transfers have taken place so far and no issues have been experienced or reported with the service.

However, the service remains fragile due to continuing issues with safely staffing the medical rotas and a high number of shifts covered almost entirely by locum and agency doctors.

As a result, we continue to progress our contingency plans which includes work towards the possible centralisation of paediatric and consultant-led maternity services to Lincoln should it be required.

Current model

At present, the following children's and maternity services are provided at Pilgrim hospital:

- Paediatric outpatient clinics
- Paediatric day case surgery.
- A 24 hour paediatric assessment and observation unit (PAU) offering restricted periods of observation (max. 12 hours).
- Consultant-led maternity birthing unit.
- Neonatal care for babies from 34 weeks gestation.

We anticipate that this interim level of service will remain in place until at least Christmas given ongoing staffing issues, but we will continue to keep you informed as the situation develops.

Our advice to all patients is, 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.

Recruitment efforts

We continue to make extensive efforts to recruit to the service, which has resulted in one new doctor starting work at the beginning of August and a further six doctors going through the recruitment process.

Our recruitment efforts include:

- A rolling NHS jobs advert for medical staff.
- Recruitment to medical agency staff.
- International recruitment.
- Use of specialist recruitment support.
- Training junior doctors at Pilgrim.
- Exploring other models of recruitment to fill vacancies.

What now?

We 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.

We understand that these plans are developing well, and that a public consultation on proposals will be run in the New Year.

We are listening

We are keen to hear from you to help us shape the future of our children's service.

We continue extensive engagement with our patients and public around this service, including visiting groups and analysing the results of our recent survey on the subject, which attracted 759 responses. The findings of this survey will be reported in the next newsletter.

As we continue to manage our staffing situation, we still 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 are also running a series of paediatric engagement events.

Here, you will find out more about the performance of and plans for the service, ask questions and help to inform any developments.

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:

- Monday 17 September 6pm – 8pm
- Tuesday 6 November 6pm – 8pm

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

Best wishes

Jan Sobieraj
Chief Executive