



## Shropshire Midwife Led Units

Bridgnorth - Ludlow - Oswestry - Shrewsbury

**Enter & View Report**

**Spring-Autumn 2015**

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## What is Enter & View?

Healthwatch Shropshire gathers information on people's experiences of health and social care services and there are times when it is appropriate for Healthwatch Shropshire to see and hear for ourselves how services are provided. These visits are called Enter and View.

The responsibility to carry out Enter & View visits was given to Healthwatch in the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Enter and View visits can be announced or unannounced and always have a purpose. They are carried out by a team of specially trained volunteers called Authorised Representatives. During visits they make observations, collect people's views and opinions anonymously and after the visit they produce a report which is shared with the service provider for fact checking and comment. This report is then published.

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## Context of the Enter & View Visits to Midwife Led Units

In 2013 a review of maternity services was commissioned by Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Groups to understand the quality and safety of maternity services provided by The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust. Following this review, in 2014 maternity services in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin were reconfigured: the Trust opened a new Women and Children's Centre at the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford, which houses all the inpatient Consultant Led obstetric services available through the Trust. Previously, Consultant Led inpatient services were available at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. Following the reconfiguration the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital maternity unit consists of the Consultant outpatient services and a stand-alone Midwife Led Unit. The Trust also runs a further four other Midwife Led Units in Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Wrekin (Telford).

In October 2014, the Care Quality Commission undertook an inspection of the hospital trust that included the maternity services.

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## The Visits

Healthwatch Shropshire completed announced Enter and View visits to the four Shropshire Midwife Led Units (Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Oswestry and Shrewsbury) in the wake of the reconfiguration of maternity services in March 2015. The purpose of the visits was:

**To assess the levels of confidence in maternity services and care, following the Maternity Services Review and reconfiguration.**

Our aim was to ensure that the “patient voice” is at the heart of service review and development. We spoke to patients, visitors and staff.

However during our visits to Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Shrewsbury we were not able to speak to many patients or their visitors. As a result we felt that the views people shared could not be seen to represent those of all people using the service. It also made it difficult for views to be anonymised. The Healthwatch Shropshire Enter & View Committee decided that we should visit these units again in the autumn to give us the opportunity to speak to as many people as possible.

Each visit was done by a team of two Authorised Representatives.

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## What we were looking at

We reviewed the recommendations in the 2013 maternity services review to develop some key issues to discuss with staff and patients at each unit.

When speaking to patients we discussed how satisfied they were with the service and their experiences of the following:

- Having a named midwife
- The information received both before and after the birth
- The process of deciding the location of the birth
- The support offered by the staff throughout pregnancy and during the post-natal period.
- The privacy and dignity of the users
- The atmosphere and environment of the unit

We also spoke to staff in order to explore with them the following;

- Staffing numbers and how this impacts on the service
- On call arrangements - how they work and impact on the service
- How emergency situations are dealt with should they arise
- The support available to the unit from other Midwife Led Units and from the new Women and Children's Centre at The Princess Royal in Telford
- How communication across the service is managed
- Meeting the needs of patients, including those from all faiths and patients for whom English is not their first language
- Local patient engagement

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## Bridgnorth Midwife Led Unit

Service Provider: Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust

Location: Bridgnorth Community Hospital

Visits: March and September 2015

Spoke to: 9 patients, 4 members of staff

### The Unit and Facilities:

The unit is situated on the top floor of the Community Hospital which is a light and pleasant building. There are four beds in two rooms available for patients and the birthing room was well equipped.

Recent fundraising meant the unit had a new birthing pool and there were plans to refurbish the active birthing room. At the time of our visit this room contained a bath and equipment, including bean bags, inflatable balls, and mats.

### Summary of Patient Comments:

- “This is where we live, it was a low risk birth, and it is like being at home”
- “I would rather have given birth at Bridgnorth if I had the choice because it was a very homely environment”
- “Home from home”
- “Peaceful and relaxing”
- “It felt like one team”, the staff “cared about you” and were “easy to talk to”, “nothing was too much trouble”, “staff go above and beyond what you need”, they are “professional and firm when they need to be”
- Being transferred to the Women and Children’s Centre at The Princess Royal Hospital in Telford: “It was absolutely not a problem”
- “The food is very good”

### Summary of Findings:

- The overall impression was that the unit was a calm, friendly place providing a high level of care. The patients we spoke to were relaxed, happy to talk to us and were all fully supportive of the unit and appreciative of the “excellent care” they had received from the “caring staff” in a “homely atmosphere”.

- Most patients had not had a ‘named midwife’ but this had not been a problem for them because they felt well supported by the team.
- The patients we spoke to said they had decided to give birth in Bridgnorth MLU because it was a more “intimate experience” and felt more like a “home from home”.
- Two patients who had been transferred to the Women and Children’s Centre in Telford during labour said this had been handled well and had not given them cause for concern. They said this demonstrated the professional approach of staff.
- All patients are made aware of what may happen in an emergency situation and that the decision to transfer to the Women and Children’s Centre is made early on to avoid additional stress for the mum.
- All the patients we spoke to said they had received plenty of information throughout their pregnancy and after birth. They had been offered support with breast feeding and information about exercise and postnatal depression services.
- Patient privacy and dignity were seen to be very important by the patients and they felt that staff worked in a non-intrusive manner.
- £16,500 has been raised for a birthing pool since September 2014, beating an original target of £11,500 and showing the support the unit has in the community. The League of Friends donated £7,500 towards the cost. Following the refurbishment of the birthing pool room, there was £3,500 surplus in the fund, which was planned to be used to refurbish the active birthing room.
- All members of staff we met during our visits were open and willing to talk to us. Staffing levels appeared to be good and staff were confident and able to talk freely about their roles and duties.
- Staff told us they felt confident in being able to care for people who do not have English as their first language and people who may have certain faith requirements.
- The unit has scored highly in two categories of the Friends and Family test and it is proud of the scores. The numbers involved in the survey are however quite small.

- The unit provides a service for a wide geographic area and supports patients from out of county e.g. Pattingham, Codsall in South Staffs. Information had to be carried by the woman in paper copies as electronic records could not be viewed out of county.
- The Ward Manager showed us the rota for staff to attend training at the Women and Children's Centre in Telford and that staff work there for a period of four months every three years. Meetings are held for all the Midwife Led Units in the Shropshire area to exchange and update information and these have helped to improve overall communication about important issues.
- Since the opening of the new Women and Children's Centre in Telford in 2014 there has been a reduction in the number of births at Bridgnorth's Midwife Led Unit. The number of births fell from 85 in 2013 to 59 in 2014. This trend appeared to be reversing for 2015. Staff said they thought this was because prospective patients were becoming more aware of the services on offer locally.

#### **Healthwatch Shropshire's Recommendations for Bridgnorth MLU:**

- The unit could develop a communication strategy to explore ways of communicating with mums-to-be in the community; perhaps through the use of social media. This and further fundraising activity would help raise the profile of the unit in the community.
- The unit could investigate whether Parent-craft sessions, currently held on Saturday morning, would be more convenient for parents at another time, e.g. on a weekday evening.

### **Provider Response and Action Plan for Bridgnorth MLU:**

The service provider gave the following response to Healthwatch Shropshire's recommendations on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015:

**The unit could develop a communication strategy to explore ways of communicating with mums-to-be in the community; perhaps through the use of social media. This and further fundraising activity would help raise the profile of the unit in the community.**

- The Trust has a Leadership and Communication Strategy which is overseen by the Communications Team
- The Women and Children's Centre also has a Leadership and Communication Strategy that includes all Maternity services and is overseen by the Women and Children's Centre Management Team. This strategy is due to be updated in April 2016.
- A virtual tour of all Shropshire MLUs is in production and will be available on the intranet. This is expected to be completed by April 2016.

**The unit could investigate whether Parent-craft sessions, currently held on Saturday morning, would be more convenient for parents at another time, e.g. on a weekday evening.**

- There is on-going work taking place to look at the provision of service of parent education across Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. This is being overseen by the Patient Information Midwife.

## Ludlow Midwife Led Unit

Service Provider:	Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust
Location:	Ludlow Community Hospital
Visits:	March and August 2015
Spoke to:	8 patients, 4 members of staff

### The Unit and Facilities:

The unit caters for a large rural area bordered by Herefordshire and Worcestershire to the south. It is located in the grounds of Ludlow Community Hospital. On its website it states that it aims to provide a safe, homely environment for women who are expecting a low risk delivery. The unit provides ante-natal care and post-natal care to a wide geographical area, including holding clinics in market towns e.g. Clun and Craven Arms, on a weekly basis.

The unit has a postnatal ward with three beds for mothers who have given birth, where they can enjoy the support of other new mums and staff. We were told by the women we spoke to that there is also an antenatal ward with three beds for women who are in labour where they can relax and prepare for the birth. The birthing room has dimmable lighting. The League of Friends of Ludlow Hospital has raised the funds to provide a birthing pool, but this had not been installed at the time of our visit.

### Summary of Patient Comments:

- The unit is “very friendly; a happy place with staff who are approachable and ready to go out of their way to help”
- “It is so local and I wanted to give birth close to home”
- “I had my first baby at Ludlow and I wouldn’t go anywhere else. Here it is so much more laid back and friendly”
- “Love it here, would recommend it to my friends and will come back”
- “I feel as though I am in a hotel, I have my meals, it is homely and peaceful”
- The team were “brilliant” and made the patients feel “totally safe”
- “There is a person-centred approach”
- “If you are the slightest bit worried, you only have to phone”
- A patient who had to give birth in the Women and Children’s Centre at The Princess Royal Hospital in Telford said she had had a “good experience”

### Summary of Findings:

- Overall the visit team felt that the Midwife Led Unit at Ludlow was welcoming and friendly. The staff were confident and approachable, and the patients were full of praise for the service provided and the excellent care they had received.
- The patients said they had total confidence in the unit and would certainly return for future births. They told us:
  - They were pleased with the care they received from the staff
  - They liked the relaxed and homely environment of the unit
  - They appreciated receiving excellent care provided close to home that meant they avoided a “daunting” journey to the Women and Children’s Centre in Telford when uncomfortable in labour
  - They felt their privacy and dignity were respected
  - They appreciated the flexible visiting arrangements for their partners
  - They felt they had received ample pre and post birth information from staff
  - They felt they have been supported regarding their breast feeding decision
  - They found the staff reassuring and proficient (competent/skilled).
- The two patients we spoke to who had a ‘named midwife’ said how much they valued this.
- Staff said they are very aware of the need to be able to cater for the needs of all people, including those from all faiths and for whom English is not their first language.
- The midwifery team is small, but with a high proportion of experienced midwives and health care assistants who have worked at the unit for many years.
- The unit provides placement opportunities for midwifery students.
- Staff told us that they felt included in the wider network of maternity services. The Unit Manager attends regular meetings at the Women and Children’s Centre and she then cascades information back to the staff in Ludlow.
- A variety of methods are in place to enable all grades of staff to update their practice, particularly with respect to managing emergency situations. However, it is acknowledged that small numbers of staff and such a wide area to serve makes it difficult to bring all staff together for shared learning.

- The Senior Midwife acknowledged a need to communicate more widely with mums-to-be to make them aware of the service offered locally and promote the unit as she has an aspiration to raise the number of births to one hundred per year.
- We were told that the unit is awaiting a decision from the Trust on its possible relocation into Ludlow Community Hospital. Only after this has been made can improvements to the birthing experience be undertaken. This includes installing a birthing pool which will be paid for by the League of Friends of Ludlow Hospital.
- Some higher-risk mothers-to-be choose to go to Hereford County Hospital rather than the Consultant Led Unit at the Women and Children's Centre in Telford. At the time of our first visit in March 2015 we were told that, due to complexities in funding, postnatal care cannot be provided at the Midwife Led Unit in Ludlow if the delivery was outside Shropshire, so mums and babies need to travel back to Hereford County Hospital. We were pleased to hear from some of the pregnant women on our second visit that they can now expect continuity of care from the Ludlow Midwifery team throughout the pre-birth and postnatal periods.
- Not all patient notes are electronic and easily transferrable. This means some notes have to travel with the patient if they are transferred to another unit, for example when there is an emergency.

### Healthwatch Shropshire's Recommendations for Ludlow MLU:

- Electronic records would improve the care of mothers and babies, and ensure that all information is available to all healthcare professionals involved, both in and out of county. The Trust should work towards ensuring all records are available electronically, which could reduce the number of duplicate trips for routine tests to GPs out of county.
- Healthwatch Shropshire should escalate the ongoing cross border issues relating to women's choice and the funding of labour/birth and postnatal care to Healthwatch England.
- The decision about whether the unit will be relocated into the main building of Ludlow Community Hospital is pending. Until it is made, improvements to the environment, including the installation of a birthing pool, are on hold. Shropshire Community NHS Trust, Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust and other parties should seek to make this decision as soon as possible.
- In line with the recommendations in the Maternity Services Review, the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust should be undertaking more engagement with potential and existing patients. The Trust should consider making use of social media to help them achieve this in this rural area.
- Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust should be able to assure the public that all midwives working in the Ludlow Midwife Led Unit participate in a specific and strict rotation in the Women and Children's Centre in Telford as part of their skills development.

### **Provider Response and Action Plan for Ludlow MLU:**

The service provider gave the following response to Healthwatch Shropshire's recommendations on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2015:

**Electronic records would improve the care of mothers and babies, and ensure that all information is available to all healthcare professionals involved, both in and out of county. The Trust should work towards ensuring all records are available electronically, which could reduce the number of duplicate trips for routine tests to GPs out of county.**

- Already available within county. Hand held records stay with the woman.

**Healthwatch Shropshire should escalate the issues relating to women's choice and the funding of labour/birth and postnatal care to Healthwatch England.**

- The tariff is divided into three payments; one for antenatal booking and care, the second for labour and birth and third for community care to discharge. We can provide post-natal care but bordering counties will not share the labour tariff that forms the MLU care.

**The decision about whether the unit will be relocated into the main building of Ludlow Community Hospital is pending. Until it is made, improvements to the environment, including the installation of a birthing pool, are on hold. Shropshire Community NHS Trust, Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust and other parties should seek to make this decision as soon as possible.**

- Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust has committed to upgrading the existing midwifery-led unit building. Talks are being held with SaTH, the building owners NHS Property Services together with Shropshire Community Trust.

**In line with the recommendations in the Maternity Services Review, the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust should be undertaking more engagement with potential and existing patients. The Trust should consider making use of social media to help them achieve this in this rural area.**

- No response provided at this time.

**Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust should be able to assure the public that all midwives working in the Ludlow Midwife Led Unit participate in a specific and strict rotation in the Women and Children's Centre in Telford as part of their skills development.**

- A robust rotational updating system between the Ludlow MLU and the Women's and Children's Centre is now in place.

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## Oswestry Midwife Led Unit

Service Provider: Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust  
Location: The Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital  
Visit: March 2015  
Spoke to: 5+ patients, 2 visitors, 2 members of staff

### The Unit and Facilities:

The unit is accessed by the East entrance to the hospital building. Facilities include:

- the main six-bed ward
- a day room
- two bathrooms - one with a bath and one with a shower
- a kitchen
- a first-stage room
- a labour room with an en-suite toilet and basin, a birthing pool, a large bean bag and other facilities.

### Summary of Patient Comments:

- A patient was delighted with her decision to give birth at Oswestry MLU. The help and advice she received gave her the confidence to do everything for her baby
- We were told that the midwife had joined all the mothers for breakfast to give them information to help them at home
- Two mothers described how staff had looked after their baby for a few hours at night, so that mothers could get some sleep
- Antenatal classes are “excellent” with opportunities for fathers to attend on a Saturday morning
- Two mothers said they received excellent support with breastfeeding and that the staff were always prepared to “go the extra mile”
- All the patients we spoke to were very appreciative of the homely atmosphere, and enjoyed eating together and having help always at hand

### Summary of Findings:

- We were impressed by the busy, calm, confident, professional and supportive atmosphere in the unit.
- The women in the unit were all full of praise for the staff and facilities.
- Women said they had received sufficient information before and after the birth.
- Women in the unit described feeling supported by staff in a number of different ways, including staff looking after new babies to help their mothers get some sleep.
- All the women we spoke to said they felt that their privacy and dignity were respected in the unit.
- The women told us that staff supported new mothers to feed their babies and respected their decision to breastfeed or not.
- The staff aim to provide an accessible, calm, supportive atmosphere for mothers and their babies, and a 'home from home'.
- Staff felt that staffing levels and training arrangements were appropriate.
- Staff were aware that individuals of different faiths and cultures might have different needs and require tailored support. Menus are available to cater for dietary requirements.
- Staff had had good experiences of using language interpreters.
- The unit is supported by the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust. Every four weeks all Midwife Led Unit Managers and Lead Midwives in the Trust meet. Staff told us this is very useful, enabling those present to share ideas and areas for development.
- The Ward Manager told us there is a Maternity Engagement Group. She is considering ways of telling people about the work of the MLU, including using social media as a way of communicating with patients.

### Healthwatch Shropshire's Recommendations for Oswestry MLU:

- To further develop the promotional work of the Midwife Led Unit in order to publicise the convenience, safety and ambience of the unit, and its services in the local community.
- To consider the benefits of sharing publicity ideas with other Midwife Led Units in the county.
- To further engage with GPs within their area as part of their promotional strategy.

### **Provider Response and Action Plan for Oswestry MLU:**

The service provider gave the following response to Healthwatch Shropshire's recommendations on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015:

The Women and Children's care group (at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust) would like to thank the Authorised Representatives from Healthwatch Shropshire for investing their time to visit the Oswestry Midwife led unit in March 2015. We value their feedback and always strive to make a difference to the women we care for.

**To further develop the promotional work of the Midwife Led Unit in order to publicise the convenience, safety and ambience of the unit, and its services in the local community.**

- We are in the process of promoting the Midwife led Units at every opportunity that arises. We have run a GP engagement study day at the Park Inn Telford (September 2015) and more recently at the Royal College of Midwives Conference (November 2015).
- We are in the process of producing a 360 degree visual tour for the Midwife led Units that will be available to women to access on the internet.

**To consider the benefits of sharing publicity ideas with other Midwife Led Units in the county.**

- The MLU managers meet on a monthly basis in a variety of settings to include:-
  - Maternity management group where knowledge is shared
  - Specialist Midwives and band 7 ward manager meetings
  - Maternity Governance meetings
  - Maternity and Gynaecology feedback meetings
  - Perinatal mortality meetings
  - MLU Network meetings regional
- In addition the MLU ward managers meet to discuss issues, concerns, good practice points pertinent to themselves and thus are aware of what other units are doing.

**To further engage with GPs within their area as part of their promotional strategy.**

- A special edition of GP Connect highlighting the MLUs has already been sent out via the GP liaison officer.
- The new Women and Children's commissioner is planning to visit all the MLUs and promote them during her interface with GPs.

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## Shrewsbury Midwife Led Unit

Service Provider:	Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust
Location:	The Royal Shrewsbury Hospital
Visits:	March and October 2015
Spoke to:	2 patients, 1 visitor, 3 members of staff

### The Unit and Facilities:

The unit includes two side wards each with four beds, a room with a birthing pool, a pre-labour room, and general facilities for patients and for staff and facilities for day patients. The Midwife Led Unit is situated adjacent to the Community Midwife Unit, which is responsible for home visits and clinics, and the PANDA unit (Pre-natal and Ante-natal Day Assessment unit).

### Summary of Patient Comments:

- One patient said they had a “brilliant” ‘named midwife’
- The one day ante-natal course was “enlightening, brilliant and very useful”
- The unit agreed to her request to give birth there instead of The Women and Children’s Centre at The Princess Royal Hospital in Telford because her partner did not drive. This was subject to there being no complications
- The transfer between the unit and The Women and Children’s Centre was very smooth
- Another patient said the staff were very caring and there was a more individual attention due to the unit being very quiet. Staff had looked after her newborn baby throughout the night to allow her to sleep undisturbed
- Observations of both her and her baby had been carried out at regular intervals during labour
- The staff were very friendly and helpful
- One patient commented that the unit is like a hospital adding “I’m not here for the décor”

### Summary of Findings:

- We talked with two new mothers over the two visits. They said they had confidence in the staff and felt supported.
- One of the patients we spoke to had a “brilliant” ‘named midwife’ but they were not present at the birth as it had taken place at The Women and Children’s Centre at The Princess Royal Hospital in Telford. In their view this did not matter at all. The transfer between units was very smooth.
- One patient and her partner told us that the one day ante-natal course delivered at the Midwife Led Unit was 'enlightening, brilliant and very useful'.
- Visiting times are unrestricted for immediate family.
- The midwife told us that the unit has many telephone conversations to support patients at home. They also told us that up to 10 ante-natal patients a day attend the day ward for support.
- One patient told us she was able to deliver at the Shrewsbury Midwife Led Unit at her own request because her partner did not drive and could not travel to Telford. This was subject to there being no complications.
- The members of staff we spoke to said they were confident that they would know of any particular requirements of a patient (e.g. the needs of women from faith groups, interpreting needs) through information provided by the GP or community midwife and in records held by the patient and/or centrally held.
- The patients we spoke to felt that the staff had respected their privacy and dignity throughout their stay. One mother commented on the fact there was a large window with only one curtain and this left her feeling exposed.
- The Midwife Led Unit has a number of individual rooms for patients, which helps patient dignity and gives privacy.
- Staff all expressed confidence in their ability to provide a good service.
- Staff said patient feedback was positive.
- It appeared that efforts were being made to make the extensive accommodation more homely for patients, e.g. a new coat of paint, pictures.

- Staff spoke positively about the Midwife Led Unit's close links with the Community Midwife Unit and PANDA unit nearby.
- Staff told us they were able to spend some time as 'exchange staff' in the higher risk units such as the Consultant Led Unit at The Women and children's Centre at The Princess Royal in Telford. There was no permanent rotational system in place but they anticipated more opportunity for shared learning across all Midwife Led Units as the reorganised structure "bedded down".
- We were told by staff that the unit is as busy as other Midwife Led Units. However we observed that the unit is large and at the times of our visits most of it was empty.

#### Healthwatch Shropshire's Recommendations for Shrewsbury MLU:

- Continue the work being done to improve the unit and give it a homely atmosphere.
- Consider improving privacy by providing effective blinds at the windows of wards/private rooms.
- Consider how more patients could be made aware of the services of their local Midwife Led Unit, and in particular that it can be used in conjunction with the Consultant Led Unit.
- Establish permanent rotations for staff into the Women and Children's Centre in Telford to update and maintain professional competencies and practice.

### **Provider Response and Action Plan for Shrewsbury MLU:**

The service provider gave the following response to Healthwatch Shropshire's recommendations on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015:

**Continue the work being done to improve the unit and give it a homely atmosphere.**

- As there is no funding to aesthetically enhance the unit, we rely on fundraising activities by staff and philanthropic donations from individuals and groups. As money becomes available, homely items are purchased.
- The unit is also on the Women and Children's Risk register, for a future new build or refurbishment.

**Consider improving privacy by providing effective blinds at the windows of wards/private rooms.**

- Blinds are already at all the windows. Occasionally, the estates Dept. struggle to upgrade some of these.

**Consider how more patients could be made aware of the services of their local Midwife Led Unit, and in particular that it can be used in conjunction with the Consultant Led Unit.**

- We are currently working with the Communication Department, GP liaison, Maternity Engagement Group and National Childbirth Trust, etc., to promote the services, as part of the on-going MLU promotion and marketing strategy
- GP study days have now been held at both Shropshire and Telford Venues, to enlighten GPs as to where women can choose to book- Alison Jones sends out monthly GP information updates, of which MLU's have featured.
- 360 degree video/DVD will be available to view for each of the MLUs
- The consumer 'Which' magazine continues to update their information about the MLUs.

**Establish permanent rotations for staff into other MLUs to update and maintain professional competencies and practice.**

- A robust and transparent midwifery rotation/updating system is already in place. This enables midwives to move between high and low risk areas to ensure skills are up-to-date and transferable.

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## Conclusions

The purpose of these Enter and View visits was to:

**To assess the levels of confidence in maternity services and care, following the Maternity Services Review and reconfiguration.**

The patients we spoke to in all the Midwife Led Units praised the staff and expressed high levels of confidence in the service. They told us that they had felt supported and reassured throughout and the care they had received had been excellent.

### Having a named midwife

The Trust is working towards a 'substantive' number of patients having a 'named midwife'. At the time of our visits we found that many of the patients we spoke to did not have a 'named midwife'. The patients we spoke to at Bridgnorth MLU did not think this had been a problem because they felt well supported by the team. Two of the patients in Ludlow said they had valued having a 'named midwife'. A patient in Shrewsbury had a "brilliant" 'named midwife' but they were not able to be present at the birth at The Women and Children's Centre in Telford, but she didn't think that mattered. The question was not asked during our visit to Oswestry MLU.

### The information and support received both before and after the birth

All the patients we spoke to said they had received plenty of information throughout their pregnancy and after the birth. This included support with breastfeeding, information about exercise and postnatal depression services. All the patients we spoke to said they felt supported by staff. Patients at Bridgnorth MLU told us that "nothing was too much trouble" for the staff. At Ludlow they told us that staff "go out of their way to help". Patients at Oswestry and Shrewsbury told us how staff looked after new babies to help them get some sleep.

### The process of deciding the location of the birth

Many of the patients we spoke to said they had chosen to give birth in the MLU because it was a more "intimate experience" and felt more like a "home from home". Those who had to go to the Consultant Led Unit in Telford said it was "absolutely not a problem". They felt this had been handled well and the decision to transfer was taken in good time so it had not been an emergency.

Staff explained that wherever possible a decision to transfer would be taken early on to avoid a 'blue light' emergency situation. One mother at Shrewsbury MLU told us she was able to deliver at the Shrewsbury Midwife Led Unit at her own request because her partner did not drive and could not travel to Telford. This was subject to there being no complications.

### **The privacy and dignity of the users**

All the patients we spoke to across the four units told us that their privacy and dignity had been respected by the staff.

### **The atmosphere and environment of the unit**

The patients we spoke to in Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Oswestry described the MLUs as having a homely atmosphere and being "peaceful and relaxing". We saw work was being done at Shrewsbury MLU to make it more homely, including repainting and putting up pictures. The trust told us that this unit is on the list for a future new build or refurbishment.

There was less consistency in the questions asked of staff at these visits and it is difficult to draw general conclusions. However the staff we spoke to were confident in their roles and duties, and their ability to provide a good service.

### **Staffing numbers and how this impacts on the service/On call arrangements**

In Oswestry the staff told us that they felt the staffing levels and training arrangements were appropriate. In Bridgnorth we observed that staffing levels appeared to be good.

### **How emergency situations are dealt with should they arise**

Staff in all MLUs were able to explain the procedure for emergencies. Transfers between the MLUs to the Consultant Led Unit at the Women and Children's Centre in Telford appeared to be smooth. Two patients at Bridgnorth said they felt this had been handled well and demonstrated the professional approach of staff.

### **How communication across the service is managed**

The Hospital Trust has told us that electronic records are available for women within the county. Hand held records stay with the woman. At the moment electronic records cannot be viewed out of the county, e.g. if a woman gives birth in Shropshire but lives outside the county.

Staff in Oswestry told us that the unit is supported by the Trust with regular meetings that bring all the MLUs together.

In Ludlow we were told that the Unit Manager attends regular meetings at the Women and Children's Centre in Telford and she then cascades information back to the staff. A Senior Midwife at Ludlow explained that due to the small numbers of staff and such a wide area to serve it is difficult to bring all staff together for shared learning. However she feels communication between the Midwife Led Units and Consultant Led Unit is much better overall than it had been prior to the reconfiguration.

The question was not asked at Shrewsbury.

The Trust has told us that there is a rotation/updating system in place that enables midwives to move between high and low risk areas to ensure skills are up-to-date and transferable.

### **Meeting the needs of patients, including those from all faiths and patients for who English is not their first language**

The staff we spoke to about it in the MLUs were aware of the need to be able to cater for the needs of all people, including those from all faiths and for whom English is not their first language. Staff told us they can request an interpreter if necessary and they speak to the kitchen staff to provide special dietary requirements. The staff in Shrewsbury MLU told us that information about the patient's needs is usually provided by the GP or Community Midwife and in the patient's records.

### **Local patient engagement**

This was one of the recommendations of the Maternity Services Review, calling for local engagement to advertise local maternity services.

Staff in Bridgnorth MLU said there had been a reduction in the number of births there since the opening of the Women and Children's Centre in Telford in 2014. In 2015 numbers appeared to be increasing again and they thought this was because more prospective parents are aware of services available locally. At the time of our visits to Shrewsbury MLU the unit was largely empty and seemed to be underused. They told us they have a large number of phone calls supporting patients when they are home and up to 10 ante-natal patients attend the day ward for support each day.

The Trust told us about their promotion and marketing strategy that includes promoting the MLUs to GPs. The impact of this strategy is unclear at the time of writing this report.

In 2015, following our visits to the Midwife Led Units in Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Shrewsbury and Oswestry Healthwatch Shropshire submitted evidence to the NHS National Maternity Review emphasising the issues faced by rural counties. The Review Report is expected to be published early 2016.

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Healthwatch Shropshire would like to thank The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, service users, visitors and staff for their contribution to these Enter & View visits and this report.

### Who are Healthwatch Shropshire?

Healthwatch Shropshire is the voice for people in Shropshire about the health and social care services delivered in their area. We are an independent body providing a way for people to share their experiences to help people get the best out of their health and social care services. As one of a network of Local Healthwatch across England we are supported by the national body Healthwatch England, and our data is fed to the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

### What is Enter & View?

Healthwatch Shropshire gather information on peoples experiences of health and social care services and there are times when it is appropriate for Healthwatch Shropshire to see and hear for ourselves how services are being delivered: these visits are called 'Enter & View', they are not inspections.

Teams of specially trained volunteers carry out visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to services users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies.