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Mr S Wright
Chief Executive
Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust
Stretton House
Shrewsbury SY

16th January 2016

Dear Simon

Maternity services in Shropshire

I am writing to you following recent media coverage of maternity services in Shropshire, especially the rural midwife led units (MLUs), and the discussion at the Shropshire CCG board on Wednesday 11th January 2017.

Healthwatch Shropshire is in receipt of a number of patient stories, has recently met with a Shropshire midwife and is a member of the Maternity Users Engagement group, MEG. As you know we also undertook Enter & View visits to the MLUs during 2016.

Our understanding of the position is that:

- during next year the SCCG has agreed to an additional reserve to help SaTH provide maternity services across the county
- there are currently no plans to close any MLUs
- consideration of a future model of care will be done during 2017-18
- any proposals for a new model of care will be put in the public domain and will also have to go out to public consultation if they involve a significant change in service provision.

I would be grateful if you could confirm our understanding.

However, we are very concerned about

- recent staffing levels that have led to short term closures of MLUs across the county and how those messages have been communicated to mothers-to-be
- where mothers-to-be are being signposted to when they were expecting a midwife led birth
- why mothers-to-be booked in to a MLU are being signposted to the Consultant Led Unit (CLU) at the Princess Royal hospital
- why newly presented mothers-to-be are being told they shouldn't book in at the local MLU as it will be closed by the time they reach full term



- whether there is capacity in the MLUS at RSH and PRH if a rural MLU (s) is closed.

As a consequence I would be grateful if you could let us know:

- What steps you are taking to ensure continuity of provision of care at the local MLUs
- How mothers-to-be will be communicated with if there is an unforeseen closure of an MLU
- Where mothers-to-be are being signposted to in the event of an unforeseen closure
- Capacity at the MLUs in Shrewsbury and Telford
- What are the messages for mothers-to-be on booking in for their delivery, if there is no clinical need for a consultant led birth.

In addition, we are interested in the figures for 2016 of:

- Numbers of births in each of the MLUs including the Shrewsbury MLU and the Wrekin Unit by Shropshire women (broken down by unit)
- Number of births (by Shropshire residents) at the Consultant Led Unit at PRH
- Number of women who were booked in to an MLU who did not deliver there
- Number of times the CLU has been full and the number of mothers-to-be who have had to transferred out of county
- Number of women who are transferred back to MLUs from the CLU for bed based postnatal care (including from out of county)
- Number of women receiving post-natal care who had to be discharged from MLUs as a result of closure of the MLU to staff the CLU.

We spoke last year about the tariff and the implications for women who deliver out of county but choose to have the ante-natal and post-natal care close to home in Shropshire. We were pleased that SaTH agreed to continue to provide the postnatal care locally and I would be grateful if you could confirm that the tariff has now been split and that you receive the appropriate remuneration for the care you are providing. If not, I will escalate this through Healthwatch England as it is an unfair system and it cannot only be an issue locally.

I am writing under the statutory framework afforded to Healthwatch Shropshire (HWS) under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and require SaTH to respond within 20 working days to the requests listed above in relation to concerns and questions about maternity services for Shropshire residents.

We look forward to receiving your response no later than 13th February 2017. For your information, we will use your response in our You Said We Did report, which is published regularly.

Yours sincerely

Jane Randall-Smith

Jane Randall-Smith
Chief Officer

