

Appendix A

Report title: Maternity Services - Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust	
Report to: Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
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Date: 8 May 2024	For: Discussion
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County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust has three strategic goals, focused on quality of care, equity for our population and opportunities for our people. We consider our annual objectives against this strategy in the context of the needs of the mid and south Essex population, and the integrated care strategy of our system partners.

In this report to the Committee, the Trust presents updates on planned improvements and operational data, as well as additional information about improvements to its cancer performance and waiting lists.

2. Action required

To note the contents of the report.

3. Update on Maternity Services from the Trust

- The Trust has been working to improve services for families across mid and south Essex. We have increased choice for mothers and birthing people and recruited more midwives to ensure we can provide safe and effective care.
- Midwife to Birth ratios are all within target for the month of March 2024.
- **Midwifery** turnover is continuing to show a positive reduction from a peak of 19.1% in July 2022 to significant low of 7.2% in March which has remained better than the Trust performance target for the last seven months.
- The 'Three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services' [B1915-three-year-delivery-plan-for-maternity-and-neonatal-services-march-2023.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](#) has been launched. This report combines themes from all maternity reviews to streamline improvement work within maternity units allowing Trusts to identify key areas of concerns within their units. The Trust is working on an action plan to deliver all the recommendations in the plan.
- The Trust reopened the William Julian Courtauld Unit at St Michael's Hospital in Braintree in October 2023 for intrapartum care. The unit is ideally placed to support women and families in the mid and north of our mid and south Essex geography. Feedback from the unit has been positive.
- As a Trust we are prioritising recruitment of our band 5 and band 6 midwives as they contribute to the majority of our maternity workforce. We are also focussed on recruiting

support workers and are working closely with the regional team to ensure we follow the National upskilling program for our band 2 midwifery support workers to help support our midwives and service users and their families. Our current maternity vacancy rate is 9% which is lower than the target rate of 11.5%. We have been on an improving trajectory since October 2023.

- We have a budgeted workforce of 779.35 staff and have 110.01 new starters in the pipeline. Our leavers are currently 43.49 so we are continuing to recruit more staff than are leaving currently.
- Included in our Maternity Improvement Plan is the maternity culture and leadership and workforce programme, which includes monthly multi-disciplinary team (MDT) professional behaviours workshops; this month has also included a preceptorship learning day exploring values and behaviours. We are determined to make our hospitals a great place to work and where people feel able to raise concerns and enjoy coming to work.

3.1 Number of births at the Trust

In March 2024 there were 944 births across Mid and South Essex.

- Basildon - 331
- Broomfield - 327
- Southend- 286

4. Care Quality Commission

Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust has been working on a programme of improvement across its maternity services. In June 2022, the CQC inspected the three maternity services across Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust's acute sites. In December 2022 the CQC rated the services as 'requires improvement'.

We have responded to the CQC actions, which were 'must do' and 'should do' and prioritised those we could quickly improve. There are currently 17 open CQC actions, 11 of these are in progress and 6 are complete awaiting sign off.

4.1 The Trust has recently had an unannounced CQC inspection of Maternity services at all three sites on 25-27 March 2024. We will publish the findings when the report is published by the CQC.

5. Entonox and proactive monitoring

In October 2022 we were made aware of high levels of nitrous oxide (Entonox) in the delivery rooms at Basildon Hospital. We took immediate action to ensure the unit was made safe for staff and at no point were families at any risk. We now have robust systems in place and are confident that nitrous oxide levels are well within the safe limits.

The Trust also committed to commissioning an independent investigation to fully understand what went wrong and how we could ensure that it doesn't happen again. The executive summary of this report was published in February 2024 and is available to read here: <https://www.mse.nhs.uk/latest-news/hospital-pledged-to-improve-working-environment-6929>

6. Documentary on midwives at Basildon Hospital

The Trust has welcomed Firecracker Films in to shoot an eight-episode documentary with midwives at Basildon Hospital as they start off their careers in midwifery. The series, commissioned by UKTV and filmed by the makers of Emma Willis Delivering Babies, followed midwives as they did their exams, learnt their craft, supported women and birthing people and each other. The series will

shine a positive light on the real lives of midwives and hopefully encourage people thinking of becoming midwives, to start their careers in mid and south Essex. We expect the series to air in autumn this year.

7. Proposals on the changes to midwife led services at St Peter's

The consultation, led by the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board closed in April and an independent research company is compiling the feedback. We know there has been huge strength of feeling around movement of in-patient births from St Peter's and we are considering all our options. Once a final decision is made, we'll ensure with maternity staff working in mid Essex and St Peter's and Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership are involved in shaping the service to meet the needs of those who are eligible for midwife led births across mid Essex. We are committed to keeping services in Maldon and surrounding areas.

8. Success stories

The maternity bereavement team at Broomfield Hospital have been recognised for the compassionate care they give families experiencing baby loss after winning three prizes at a prestigious national baby loss awards. The group, known as The Blossom Team, were given the coveted title of Bereavement Team of the Year at the Mariposa Awards.

Individual members of the team were also celebrated with a special recognition award in the Compassionate Award, won by Max Ridley-Snell, a Specialist Bereavement Midwife, and another win for the Community Award by Julie Ellingford, the team's dedicated support group volunteer.