

Maternity Services During Covid-19

Report of Clinical Director, Devon Local Maternity System

1. The Devon Local Maternity System (LMS) was set up to develop and implement the NHS Five Year Forward View including the maternity strategy Better Births, with the aim of improving the safety, quality and outcomes of maternity services. Devon's Local Maternity System Transformation Plan for 2017-2021 has been developed collaboratively with NHS and Local Authority partners as part of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan processes. Whilst the transformation plan has been placed on hold until the autumn, the principles of how the LMS work have been used during the pandemic.

The plan includes a description of services. In summary across Devon LMS there are four providers providing care for around 12,000 women per annum. The providers are:

- North Devon HealthCare NHS Trust,
- Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust,
- University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust
- Torbay and South Devon NHS Trust.

2. Maternity Voices Partnership

An NHS Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) is a multidisciplinary NHS working group chaired by a service user representative; a team of women and families, commissioners and maternity service staff, collaborate to review and develop local maternity care. The Chair of Devon MVP is a key part of the weekly meetings set up since the initiation of the covid pandemic and a long standing member of the LMS Board. During our response to covid we have increased the time of the MVP chair and co-chairs. Regular contact is maintained with our MVP chair by core LMS staff to ensure the principles of co-production are maintained and ensure that she is kept abreast of any changes and can be an informed link with woman and their families.

3. How the LMS are responding during the Covid period; consistency of practice and guidance across Devon.

When the pandemic started, the Devon LMS developed a hibernation, acceleration and remobilisation plan, and from this initiated a weekly meeting to ensure that it was responsive to issues arising around maternity services as a result of the coronavirus.

This meeting is chaired by the LMS Clinical Director and has been regularly attended by the Directors/Heads of Midwifery (and /or their nominated representatives), the Devon MVP

Chair, Devon County Council (DCC) Public Health Nursing Lead and Public Health Consultant. The meeting is used to ensure consistency of practice, particularly in response to issues raised through the pandemic.

Examples of the key items addressed in the meeting include;

- Understanding and addressing national guidance and any differences in implementation of that guidance or variations in service provision. The pace of service changes and updates to national guidance has resulted in some areas of variation for a time, but once recognised has been addressed.
- Ensuring there is a mechanism in place for mutual aid support.
- Coordination and consistency between the four acute providers of maternity services.
- Agreeing and sharing key messages, a set of Frequently Asked Question (FAQs) for service users has been co-produced with Devon MVP and is now published online.
- Reducing any discrepancies and agreeing key messages for our service users. These messages are reviewed and updated weekly.
- Acceleration of work, in recognition of the potential lack of antenatal education for women Devon LMS has purchased and implemented a digital package (Solihull) for use by all women including those with vulnerabilities.

4. Working in partnership with colleagues especially Public Health Nursing (PHN) and Children's Centres and identifying vulnerable pregnancies.

During the Covid pandemic there has been a strengthening of the multi-professional approach to caring for women and their families. The PHN teams have invited LMS representatives onto their key meetings and the DCC Head of PHN is a member of the weekly LMS meeting. Additional focussed meetings have taken place as required e.g. line of sight on 0-2 year olds.

Vulnerable pregnancies are identified through weekly Early Help and vulnerable 0-8 working group the premise of the group is to ensure we have a robust oversight and are monitoring vulnerable 0-8 children across all services. During the provision of care of the antenatal pathway the notification completed by the midwife in pregnancy provides key information to the PHN service. PHN colleagues then complete an antenatal assessment during pregnancy. There is awareness of the increased importance of completing the notification for the PHN teams and this is being closely monitored by the PHN and midwifery teams.

Antenatal care provision has continued during pregnancy, whilst some visits have been delivered through alternative means (e.g. Attend Anywhere video consultation), in line with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) guidance. Full schedules of care have been provided. Although face to face contact appointments have reduced as a result of Covid-19, vulnerable families remain a central component for Devon LMS, areas of concern raised by our PHN colleagues are addressed through weekly meetings. An agreement was made that the LMS will take a lead on public health messages particularly around domestic abuse, excessive crying, smoking and co-sleeping. These messages are subsequently shared on all the maternity providers communications pages and Devon MVP social media pages.

Devon LMS is developing relationships with our third party groups in particular SNUG to ensure that we include neonatal families in any changes or developments due to Covid-19. SNUG equally share information through Devon MVP and provide a gateway for working with some of our vulnerable families. As part of the weekly process assurance is provided on the continued provision of service and staffing impact. To date there has been full provision of services with maintained public health and safeguarding provision in each provider. Through the weekly meeting clarification has been obtained on the maintenance of referral pathways and assurance on the ability to deliver services. Key messages for women and their families are shared through the weekly communication which is used by each Provider.

Tracey Reeves

Clinical Director

Devon Local Maternity System

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools: Councillor James McInnes

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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