

## FAQS FOR EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

### Background information regarding use of these potential questions

This document sets out a series of proposed handling lines in the event of questions that may be asked by patients or concerned members of the public following the publication of the neonatal review. Please note:

- Cheshire Police will be handling all media enquiries relating to the investigation. The press desk is 01606 365 942.
- The Countess will be handling all media enquiries relating to what neonatal care is, and assurances that the unit is safe on **I&S** or by emailing [countess.feedback@ihs.uk](mailto:countess.feedback@ihs.uk). Outside of office hours this is via the usual on call manager arrangements.

### What has happened?

- As part of our ongoing review of neonatal services it is clear that some but not all questions have been answered about the unexplained deaths seen in neonatal services between June 2015 and June 2016 at The Countess of Chester.
- The hospital has taken its clinical review of neonatal care as far as it is able to. This is why we have now asked for the help of Cheshire Police to seek assurances that enable us to exclude and rule out unnatural causes of death.

### What was this clinical review? I haven't heard about it?

- In July 2016 we took the decision to change admission arrangements for neonatal facilities. The unit stopped providing intensive care. Any women expected to deliver earlier than 32 weeks were transferred to a neighbouring facility. This step was taken because we wanted to better understand why there had been a greater number of deaths than we would normally expect on our neonatal unit in 2015 and 2016.
- In addition we requested a review of the unit from The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and the Royal College of Nursing. We asked for this external assessment, it was not imposed on us or mandated.
- This report was published in February 2017. It was circulated widely, published on our website and covered in regional and national media. In the report, there is no single cause or factor identified to explain the increase we have seen in our mortality numbers. The review makes a total of 24 recommendations across a range of areas including compliance with standards, staffing, competencies, leadership, team working and culture. We are already working to implement these recommendations.
- One of the recommendations included conducting a further thorough independent review of each neonatal death in 2015 and 2016 to determine any factors which could have changed the outcomes.
- You can see the report here: <http://www.coch.nhs.uk/corporate-information/news/neonatal-review-and-update.aspx>

**What is neonatal care – I don't understand the difference between maternity care and neonatal care...**

- Up until the point your baby is born you are looked after under the care of our maternity and obstetrics team.
- If your baby is poorly when it is born and needs to go to our neonatal unit, their care will transfer to doctors and nurses on our neonatal team.
- You can find out more about neonatal care here: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/baby-special-intensive-care.aspx>
- Bliss <https://www.bliss.org.uk>

**Will the unit be closed during this investigation?**

- No. We are confident the unit is safe. Services will continue on the same level as they have done since July 2016.
- This investigation relates to deaths between June 2015 and June 2016.
- There have been no further deaths on the unit since admission arrangements were changed in July 2016.

**What if women want to change where they now have their baby?**

- We have a fantastic and caring team of midwives and doctors here at The Countess. They have won awards for their care.
- Our maternity services are operating as usual. There is no need for women to re-book.
- We would encourage women planning to have their baby not to just take our word for it – look at reviews of the service (there is some really useful information on our maternity Facebook page), read our CQC report, speak to other mums for their experiences and talk to our staff.
- If any women booked in have concerns, they can arrange to speak with their community midwife.

**Is there a helpline for patients?**

- No. The police are in contact directly with those families affected.
- Any Mums-to-be who have any queries about their pregnancy and what this change means for them, can request an antenatal appointment via their community midwife.
- Alternatively people are able to contact the PALs team on 0161 275 1851

**What will this mean for The Babygrow Appeal and the Chester Childbirth Trust?**

- This investigation does not change our plans and ambitions for The Babygrow Appeal neonatal unit.
- Our review work to date recognises the challenges of the current environment and makes our case to progress our work with this all the more of a priority.
- We will be moving forward with the unit, with work expected to start this year.

- There is a great deal of goodwill and support for our charity plans and neonatal care at The Countess and for this we are extremely grateful.

**What support are you offering for women who have queries about their pregnancy?**

- Any Mums-to-be who have any queries about their pregnancy and what this change means for them, are advised request an antenatal appointment via their community midwife
- We will be working with our teams in maternity to lay on additional antenatal clinics if needed.

**How can we help in assuring patients our services are safe?**

- If you work here or deal with The Countess regularly, then you know we have a fantastic and caring team of midwives, specialist nurses and doctors here.
- The whole basis is that we identified the change in our neonatal services, we initiated the review, we acted on the recommendations and we have approached the police for their help.
- The Trust had its CQC inspection in February last year, the report was published in June. This can be found here: [http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new\\_reports/AAAF5451.pdf](http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/AAAF5451.pdf)
- This will be a really difficult time for everyone working in neonatal and maternity services and they need the support of us all in the weeks ahead.
- We would encourage you to tell people this, and to not just take our word for it – look at reviews of the service. There is some really useful information and reviews on our maternity Facebook page, people can read our CQC report, and we would encourage pregnant women to speak to other mums for their experiences.
- If any women booked in have concerns, they can arrange to speak with their community midwife.

**What if I am approached by a patient who has lost a baby at The Countess, who wants to speak with someone about what this means...**

- The police are speaking with the affected families about this.
- This investigation relates to the period of the review between June 2015 and June 2016.
- However, we appreciate this is a sensitive matter.
- If your baby was not cared for by the neonatal unit, it does not affect you. However we appreciate that this will have brought back a lot of emotions for you. If you would like to speak to someone who can provide support we can point you in the right direction.
- Are you aware of Sands? This is a local support service. You can find out more about this service here: <https://www.uk-sands.org>
- Another organisation providing support and information around neonatal care is Bliss <https://www.bliss.org.uk>

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