

### **Representations from Liz Warren**

I am strongly opposed to the proposal to close the St Mary's Birth Centre for a number of reasons.

Recent research has demonstrated that births in a midwife-led centre are actually cheaper than in an obstetric unit, taking all costs into consideration, including medical costs.

In addition I would question whether the apparent aim to concentrate all maternity facilities for the area in one huge hospital is consistent with their stated overall aim to move health facilities out of hospitals and into the community.

In their documentation, UHL talks simply of proposing to relocate the standalone midwifery unit at St Mary's to the General Hospital site in Leicester. It is not made clear that the unit at the General would not provide the additional post-natal care and support which is offered by St Mary's. The summary document and the questionnaire are both giving a misleading impression about this. The full document, itself, is not clear either. It is unacceptable to give such a misleading impression.

The documentation makes clear that 500 births are required each year for the midwifery unit at the General to be considered viable and that the unit would close if that is not achieved within a trial period. The length of the trial period has not been stated in the documentation, as far as I can ascertain, but one year has been mentioned and, at recent public meetings Andrew Furlong and Mark Wightman have indicated that it might possibly be longer. Uncertainty about this will discourage women from using the unit, as I imagine it discourages women in Melton from using St Mary's at the moment (and has probably done so in the past). I understand that women are asked at the beginning of their pregnancy to choose where they would like their baby to be born. Very few will choose a unit which may well not exist by the time they are giving birth. UHL should be required to demonstrate their commitment to this type of birth setting by trumpeting the success of St Mary's, pledging to keep it and support it long into the future - AND by setting up a similar Centre (offering the same support) IN ADDITION - Not instead - in the centre of Leicester. Bearing in mind that research has shown that births in such centres are actually cheaper than in hospitals, this would benefit the tax-payer as well as mothers-to-be.

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