

Representations from campaign groups regarding St Mary's Birthing Centre

The campaign groups: "Save St. Mary's Birth Centre, Melton Mowbray", "Save Our Services – St Mary's Birth Centre" and "Speak Up For St. Mary's Birth Centre", would like to draw the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's attention to the following areas of concern and related questions regarding the proposed closure of St Mary's Birth Centre, as part of the Building Better Hospitals proposals:

1. One of the expressed aims of current proposals, is giving mums-to-be increased choice in how they give birth. Whilst clinically, a home birth offers the same risk assessment as a stand-alone midwife led unit, the environment and experience for the labouring mother is entirely different – where there might not be room for a birthing pool, there is no privacy from other family members (such as children present in the home), and it might not be suitable for those in hostels, B&Bs or shared accommodation etc, disproportionately impacting the choice of the poorest and most vulnerable. Therefore: How does the removal of the option to give birth anywhere but the city of Leicester, unless at home, increase choice of birth experience for the women across the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland?
2. The claim is that there aren't enough women giving birth at St. Mary's to make it financially viable long-term. However, we have women telling us that they are not being offered it as a choice. We also hear regularly that it is a struggle for women to find good quality information about it. If you Google St Mary's Birth Centre Melton Mowbray for example, you are presented with an outdated webpage, including a link to a Which? Guide that doesn't even exist anymore when clicked. So:
 - a) What evidence is there to suggest location specifically, is the only reason women aren't choosing St. Mary's birth centre, rather than under-promotion of this type of birth option – or indeed any other reason – which will then be solved by locating it elsewhere?
 - b) What are the plans to increase birth numbers at the new birth centre at the LGH, ensuring it is more sustainable and therefore remains a choice for women to give birth in (as per the Better Births guidelines), rather than just a trial destined to fail?
 - c) Can you highlight the cost analysis of giving birth in a stand-alone midwife led unit vs an alongside midwife led unit in a larger hospital with more medical resources available, confirming how you calculate the costs involved?

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