



News Release

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HOSC recommends fullest review of all options on maternity services

The East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) has today agreed recommendations to the East Sussex Primary Care Trusts on the need to thoroughly assess all options before making changes to local maternity services.

Currently, consultant-led maternity, inpatient gynaecology and special care baby services for the majority of East Sussex residents are provided at two sites: Eastbourne District General Hospital and the Conquest Hospital in Hastings.

The Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) have put forward four potential options for the configuration of these services which all involve providing them from one of these sites in the future.

Local campaign groups 'Save the DGH' and 'Hands off the Conquest' have published an alternative fifth option, retaining medium-risk consultant-led maternity and special baby care services on both sites with alternative staffing arrangements. Recently, two further proposals have come forward, from the Maternity Services Liaison Committee and a local paediatrician, which also involve making changes to staffing to maintain services across the two sites.

HOSC believes these alternative proposals should be explored more fully by the PCTs before they come to a decision.

As Councillor Sylvia Tidy, HOSC Chairman, explained,

"The detailed evidence we have heard demonstrates that the services do need to change and adapt in some way to meet ever more demanding standards. We have also listened carefully to the public, and feel it is important that on a subject as important as maternity services, all the possible ways to meet these standards are looked at carefully."



The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is managed by East Sussex County Council and works in partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Rother District Council and Wealden District Council.

HOSC has undertaken an extensive programme of evidence gathering, to help it understand the clinical issues, staffing challenges and the needs and preferences of local people. Those who contributed evidence included hospital doctors, midwives, GPs, the National Childbirth Trust (NCT), South East Coast Ambulance Trust, and Patient and Public Involvement Forums. National guidance and best practice on maternity services was also reviewed by the Committee.

Its recommendation that the PCTs review the full range of options open does not favour or endorse any particular configuration of services. However, HOSC also made a series of recommendations on issues the PCTs should consider when reviewing the various options and making a decision.

The PCTs are expected to make a final decision before Christmas, which HOSC will then review.

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Notes for editors

- The two district general hospitals are situated approximately 21 miles apart on the coastal strip of East Sussex. In terms of the maternity service, both hospitals offer a consultant-led obstetric (childbirth) service with the Eastbourne site handling approximately 1900 births and the Hastings site approximately 1700 births (based on 2006/7 figures). This works out at approximately 5 births per day per site, of which statistically 2 per day at each site will require some form of medical intervention.
- On 26th March 2007, the East Sussex Primary Care Trusts launched a public consultation which made specific proposals to reconfigure maternity, inpatient gynaecology and special baby care services. These options are:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Eastbourne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant-led maternity unit • Special care baby unit • Inpatient gynaecology 	No maternity unit or special baby care unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant-led maternity unit • Special care baby unit • Inpatient gynaecology 	Midwife-led birthing centre
Hastings	No maternity unit or special baby care unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant-led maternity unit • Special care baby unit • Inpatient gynaecology 	Midwife-led birthing centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant-led maternity unit • Special care baby unit • Inpatient gynaecology

- Under all options a midwife-led birthing centre would continue to be provided at Crowborough. Under all options the outpatient, antenatal and community midwifery aspects of maternity care would continue to be delivered at both Eastbourne District General Hospital and the Conquest Hospital. Under all options the outpatient, day surgery, investigative and emergency pregnancy service aspects of gynaecology would continue to be delivered at both sites.
- The PCTs' public consultation closed on 27th July 2007.

HOSC

East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) was set up, in October 2003, by East Sussex County Council in response to Government aims to get people more involved in health decision-making and improving local health services. The committee includes members from every district and borough in the county - Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden – and representatives from the voluntary sector. HOSC website: www.eastsussexhealth.org

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