

Trust Head Office
Hemel Hempstead General Hospital
Hillfield Road
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP2 4AD
Tel: 01442 287609
Fax: 01442 287685

October 2007

Dear Colleague,

A period of informal discussion on the future of the Hemel Birthing Centre has just ended. It was run alongside the Acute Services Review and sought the views of local service users, GPs, midwives, obstetricians and others.

We now expect to carry out a formal consultation and need to formulate viable options for consideration.

The centre has been closed since 2005 and we need to determine whether there is a cost-effective, appropriate model of care that can be provided from the birthing centre. If there is not a viable alternative, we will need to assess the possibility of permanently closing the centre.

Services would need to be clinically safe, responsive to women's choices, equitable across West Hertfordshire and wholly integrated with community-based services.

This may mean the centralisation of the community midwifery services for St Albans and Hemel Hempstead at the Birthing Centre, rather than providing them from individual GP practices.

It is essential to assess the likely demand for services provided by the birthing centre before we decide on the options for consultation. Should the Hemel Birthing Centre reopen, it must be sustainable for the long term, attract a minimum of 500 births a year and not have an adverse affect on the central Obstetric Delivery Suite and the midwifery-led service provided by the Alexandra Birthing Centre at Watford General Hospital.

Commissioning of the services lies in the hands of the Practice Based Commissioners. It would be helpful to know whether Groups support the re-opening of the service and are willing to commission care. I appreciate that it may not be possible to give a definitive response at this point in time, but an indication of your thinking would be very helpful.

If it would be helpful to discuss this issue do please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Nick Evans.

Nick Evans
Director of Business Development