

REPORT TO CABINET

(15.09.15)

Cabinet Member: Councillor Gareth Roberts

Subject: Temporary Changes to Women's and Maternity Services in North Wales.

Contact officer: Awen Morwena Edwards

The decision sought/purpose of the report

The Cabinet's agreement is sought to provide feedback to the Health Board in terms of the likely impact on the residents of Gwynedd which would derive from implementing the various options. It is noted that, on the whole, Option 4 would have the least impact in terms of access to services by Gwynedd residents.

We expect the Health Board to make the best clinical decision in order to resolve current concerns; however, as a Council we are eager to ensure a more local solution in the long term.

Introduction

The Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is considering undertaking temporary changes to consultant-led (obstetrics) maternity services and is consulting on four options.

- *Option 1 – services stay as now and we continue to manage current risks and issues with medical staffing and team working.*
- *Option 2 – temporary change to maternity services at Maelor Hospital.*
- *Option 3 – temporary change to maternity services at Ysbyty Gwynedd.*
- *Option 4 – temporary change to maternity services at Glan Clwyd Hospital.*

The closing date for observations on the change is 5 October. The full consultation can be seen on the health service website at www.cymru.nhs.uk/mamolaethgc

The Health Board is concerned that obstetrics services are becoming increasingly unstable and, in addition to this, there are concerns regarding the shortage in numbers of doctors, difficulty recruiting qualified staff, training for junior doctors and the need to meet national standards for quality of care. There are currently three main hospitals in north Wales (Wrexham Maelor Hospital, Ysbyty Gwynedd and Glan Clwyd Hospital) which offer obstetric (consultant-led) services. Options 2, 3, and 4 below mean, in relation to the three, that these hospitals will not be able to offer consultant-led services – but that they will still be able to offer midwifery-led services. The midwifery-led service means a maternity unit in which care is provided by midwives who support mothers who are experiencing a straightforward or low risk pregnancy.

The Health Board stresses that there are risks involved with Option 1 and that it therefore favours Option 4 – as this is the option which is likely to have the least impact on travel, other services and because it can be implemented sooner than the rest.

Reasons for recommending the decision

The four options and their likely impact on the residents of Gwynedd are listed below. Appendix A provides further details on the options and show their impact on services.

Option 1 – services stay as now and we continue to manage current risks and issues with medical staffing and team working.

The Health Board stresses that this option is unstable in the short term and is therefore proposing temporary changes (namely Options 2, 3, and 4). We accept that changes need to be made in the short term; however, in an ideal world access to services would continue as at present. The situation reflects similar discussions which have been held internally in the Council, in terms of shortages in some functions and the need to plan ahead for the future. Despite this, the Council is hopeful that it will be possible to resolve the situation in the long term in order to ensure suitable access to services across north Wales.

Option 2 – temporary change to maternity services at Maelor Hospital.

This option would have a detrimental effect on access to services for the residents of Gwynedd, specifically those people living in the south of the county (who use Wrexham Maelor Hospital).

Implementing this option would also involve centralising the 'Inpatient Breast Surgery' Service at Wrexham Maelor Hospital. This would then lead to a significant increase in travelling time for patients living in north Gwynedd.

Based on the increase in travel time for the residents of Gwynedd as a whole, we consider that this option should not be considered further.

Option 3 – temporary change to maternity services at Ysbyty Gwynedd.

This option would have a detrimental effect on access to services for the residents of Gwynedd, specifically those people living in the north of the county (who use Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor).

This change would result in a reduced number of the births at Ysbyty Gwynedd from 2,100 a year to 600, and 1,500 mothers would have to travel to Glan Clwyd Hospital in Bodelwyddan in order to give birth. In addition to this, gynaecology (treatment of women's diseases and conditions) at Ysbyty Gwynedd would end and women would have to travel to Glan Clwyd or Wrexham.

Of all the options, Option 3 undoubtedly has the biggest negative effect on patients. Indeed, it involves a significant increase in travel time for women and mothers from the west (Gwynedd and Anglesey) in order to reach the Consultant-led maternity unit at Glan Clwyd Hospital. This option would leave over 20% of the population of north Wales with a 60 minute or more drive (1.3% for Option 1, 1.8% for Option 2 and 1.3% for Option 4). The paper submitted for consultation notes that "this option is the only scenario in which drive times of over 60 minutes increase significantly".

In a service where time is such a critical factor to the health of the mother and child, we believe that Option 3 should not be given any further consideration.

Option 4 – temporary change to maternity services at Glan Clwyd Hospital.

Of all the options, as far as we can see this is the option that would have the least impact on the residents of Gwynedd. However, the service

would mean centralising the 'Inpatient Breast Surgery' Service at Glan Clwyd Hospital, Bodelwyddan. Although this option would not have such a far-reaching effect on the residents of Gwynedd as options 2 and 3, it would involve a change in the current provision for residents in the north of the county. The implications of this option need to be discussed with the Health Board to see whether it would be possible to alleviate some of the effects on the residents of Gwynedd.

Relevant considerations

The Health Board is considering the Options in accordance with equality and human rights.

Next steps and timetable

Provide feedback to the Health Board dependent on the Cabinet's decision.

Views of the statutory officers

The Chief Executive:

This matter is clearly of great concern to the public across north Wales. Also, the main interest of this Council obviously involves the interests of families and individual from Gwynedd and the proposed observations reflect this.

Looking objectively at the matter, the argument in relation to comparative travel times is a key factor in such a sensitive field and, as it happens, this argument is quite clearly in favour of keeping the provision at Ysbyty Gwynedd.

I approve the observations.

The Monitoring Officer:

The subject of this consultation is obviously important and it is appropriate that the full Cabinet gives its attention to the response.

The Head of Finance Department:

Nothing to add from a financial propriety perspective.

Appendices

Appendix A

Background Documents

'Temporary Changes to Women's and Maternity Services in North Wales – Have your Say' (Published by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, August 2015).

<http://www.nwmaternity.org.uk/>