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Maternity engagement off to great start

Posted on Wednesday 4th November 2015

Engagement about maternity services has got off to a great start with more than 250 people responding to an online survey in the first 24 hours.

The engagement, led by Healthwatch Cumbria working with local Maternity Services Liaison Committees, which include women who have used services, and local NHS organisations, aims to find out about what is important to women at every stage of their pregnancy. It is targeting women who have used maternity services over the past five years, their partners, birth supporters and families.

An online questionnaire is available at www.surveymonkey.com/r/maternityviews Paper copies are available and information is being shared with schools so that they can pass this onto parents.

People can also email comments to info@healthwatchcumbria.co.uk

As well as the survey, which will run throughout November, teams from Healthwatch, the Maternity Services Liaison Committees and local NHS organisations are attending a wide range of sessions across Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden where mothers meet and families meet with their children to seek views. These venues include baby clinics, libraries, soft play and leisure, community, children's and family centres.

A number of drop-in sessions are also being organised, the first as follows:

Wednesday 11 November from 5pm to 7pm at Frizington Community Primary School, Main Street, Frizington, Cumbria CA26 3PF

Others will be publicised once details are finalised.

Sue Stevenson is from Healthwatch Cumbria, the organisation with a statutory role to make sure that local views are taken into consideration over the development and delivery of health and care services. She said: "We are very pleased that we have had such a good response to the online survey and we look forward to hearing more views from local people as we attend local venues where mothers and families meet with their children over the next few weeks.

"It is very important that people take the opportunity to share their views with us as these will help make sure that future maternity services meet local needs and wishes as much as possible."

The engagement activity will end at noon on Monday 30 November 2015. All feedback will be evaluated independently by Healthwatch. It will then be handed to the implementation group set up in June following the independent review of maternity services. The group is chaired by Dr David Rogers and includes Dr Anthony Falconer a former past president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) who led the independent review, Cath Broderick, chair of the RCOG Women's Network, senior local midwives, representatives from Healthwatch and members of Maternity Services Liaison Committees.

In line with the recommendation of the independent review, the implementation group has been developing a detailed feasibility report on the cost, viability and risks of proceeding with Option 1 (the independent review team's preferred option) in the long term, including the amount of additional commissioned funding required and whether the model can be supported. The report following the review concluded that if this could not be demonstrated, then other options, as outlined in the report, should be considered.

Option 1 means maintaining four consultant-led maternity units at Carlisle, Whitehaven, Barrow and Lancaster and the immediate development of 'alongside' midwifery-led units at Carlisle and Lancaster, with consideration in the longer term of 'alongside' midwifery-led units at Whitehaven and Barrow. (This means the midwifery-led units will be on the same site or next to the consultant-led units.)

The implementation group aims to have completed the feasibility study by early 2016. Since its establishment, the Success Regime, a new national initiative for the most challenged health economies has been formally

launched across North, West and East Cumbria. As such, the work of the implementation group will feed into Success Regime discussions about health and care services.

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