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Views sought across Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden to help improve maternity services

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Views sought across Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden to help improve maternity services

Posted on Monday 2nd November 2015

Women from across Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden with experience of using maternity services over the past five years, their partners and family members and others who may have a baby in the future are being asked to give their views to help improve maternity services.

Throughout November teams from Healthwatch Cumbria, local Maternity Services Liaison Committees and local NHS organisations will be visiting a wide range of venues, particularly those where mothers and families meet with their children, to seek views.

There is an online questionnaire www.surveymonkey.com/r/maternityviews with paper copies 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

The engagement will end at noon on Monday 30th November 2015 and all feedback received will be analysed independently by Healthwatch.

Sue Stevenson is from Healthwatch Cumbria. It has 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: "In planning this engagement exercise we have taken care to make sure that we provide opportunities across Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden for current and future users of maternity services to make their views known. We will be out and about in towns, villages and in some more remote local communities. We are very grateful for the support we are receiving from local groups, schools and other organisations which are helping us to reach local women and their families."

Sarah Hall, chair of the Eden and Carlisle Maternity Services Liaison Committee, which includes service users said: "The West Cumbria and Eden and Carlisle Maternity Services Liaison Committees are pleased to be part of the maternity services review process. The aim now is to involve users of the service in designing the future. We want views on what is a "good" maternity service, so that plans progress with local needs in the forefront.

"Maternity care is important at a vulnerable time in family life. People need to feel cossetted, protected and empowered for the good of the new baby. Local views will help make sure that maternity care has a more family centred approach which will balance the professionals' emphasis on safety."

Cath Broderick, chair of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) Women's Network said: "Our focus is on hearing from current and future users of maternity services to make sure that we build on what we already know from previous local discussions about the services women are looking for throughout their pregnancy and following the birth of their baby."

Dr David Rogers, medical director of NHS Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) said: "We know how strongly local people feel about keeping consultant-led units at Carlisle and Whitehaven and we have given a commitment that we will look at every possible way of being able to safely and sustainably deliver this. So this engagement is not about whether or not we should maintain consultant-led units. It is about the services a woman is looking for before, during and after her pregnancy. This will ensure that future maternity services meet the needs and wishes of women and provide as much choice as they possibly can."

Feedback from the engagement will 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 who led the independent review, Cath Broderick, 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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