

Trust Board Briefing Paper	
Reference Number:	TB149/7/C
Date of Meeting:	23 March 2023
Presenting Director:	Suzanne Pullins, Director of Paediatrics, Women's Services, Corporate Support and Executive Director of Nursing.
Subject:	Working with you to transform Acute Maternity Services, Consultation Feedback Report, March 2023.
Purpose: Approval/Noting	The Board are asked to consider the consultation feedback and recommendation to proceed with approval of Option 4 as set out in the consultation documents.
Background:	From 25 November 2022 to 3 March 2023 the Trust has been consulting widely to inform the decision on the future of acute maternity services at the two acute hospitals: Antrim and Causeway Hospitals. The purpose of the Consultation Feedback Report is to reflect the breadth of views expressed during the consultation on the two clinically deliverable options presented. A total of 273 responses were received during the formal 14 week consultation. 155 of these responses provided a narrative in their response which have been thematically analysed. The feedback received from listening events with stakeholders and engagement with staff is also included in this report.

Consultation Outcome

The current provision of maternity services at Causeway Hospital is unsustainable because of falling birth rates, workforce challenges and the absence of neonatal facilities. Therefore the two clinically deliverable options consulted on were:

Option 3 - Consultant-led births move to Antrim site which would provide intrapartum care for an additional 600-700 births per annum. Development of a Freestanding Midwifery Led Unit (FMU) in Causeway for approximately 200-300 women suitable for low intervention midwifery-led care and birth. Retain and enhance early pregnancy assessment units, antenatal and postnatal clinics and scheduled ambulatory services on Causeway site.

The deliverability of option 3 will be subject to the outcome of the Coroner's recommendation for a comprehensive review by the Department of Health of staff numbers, training and policies within FMUs.

Option 4 - Move all births to Antrim site which would provide intrapartum care for an additional 900 births per annum. Retain and enhance early pregnancy assessment units, antenatal and postnatal clinics and ambulatory services on Causeway site.

The other options were discounted as they did not address the clinical safety concerns raised and they are not deliverable because of workforce constraints due to decreasing number of births.

In both options the Trust is committed to providing antenatal and postnatal clinics closer to home in the community. Currently women with complex conditions or those with certain conditions must travel to have all their antenatal attendances care provided at Antrim or Ballymena. We aim provide this antenatal care at clinics in Causeway Hospital. By enhancing the antenatal and postnatal care at Causeway Hospital, many women will no longer be required to make multiple trips to Antrim or Ballymena for this care. Scheduled ambulatory maternity care will also continue to be provided on the Causeway Hospital site.

The thematic analysis of the Consultation Feedback and Trust responses are set out in the Consultation Feedback Report. Feedback was received in relation to the evidence base for the proposals for change, proposed change to maternity services, antenatal and postnatal clinics, removal of the fetal maternal assessment unit, freestanding midwifery led unit, homebirths, future of Causeway Hospital, capacity at Antrim Hospital, additional travel and workforce.

In considering the consultation feedback report and in the context of the following factors affecting safety and sustainability:

- The demographic estimates for the future population of the Causeway Coast & Glens Area which suggest that the birth rate will fall by 11% over the next 20 years whilst during the same period, the population will age with the numbers of people over 75 years of age increasing by a significant 65%.
- The Risk Stratified criteria commissioned by the PHA in 2013 by which women who are currently considered high risk receive all of their ante-natal, intra-partum and post-natal care at Antrim Hospital whereas in the options

outlined the woman could receive her antenatal and post-natal outpatient care at Causeway Hospital.

- The Workforce Deficits due to challenges recruiting and retaining substantive medical and midwifery staff therefore resulting in an over reliance on medical locums and reduced availability of Midwives.
- The outcome of the comprehensive review commissioned by the Permanent Secretary at the Coroner's request into staff numbers, experience, training and policies within Freestanding Midwifery Units reopening is not yet completed.

Recommendation

Feedback from the consultation has been considered in detail and the Trust has determined that the two clinically deliverable options remain. As the Trust is not in a position to open a Freestanding Midwifery Unit during the Departmental review, the only viable course of action at present is to proceed to the implementation of **Option 4: Move all births to Antrim site which would provide intrapartum care for an additional 900 births per annum. Retain and enhance early pregnancy assessment units, antenatal and postnatal clinics and ambulatory services on Causeway site.**

Trust Board is asked to consider recommending Option 4 for submission to the Department of Health for approval, with the option to reconsider Option 3 once the regional review has been completed.