

## Consultation on proposed changes to maternity services in Clyde



## Foreword

When NHS Greater Glasgow took on responsibility for providing health services across Clyde in April 2006 we inherited a large funding gap because the cost of providing services every year was £30m more than the budget available.

We made a commitment that we would tackle this shortfall over three years by reviewing existing services to ensure they are delivered in the most cost-effective and efficient way.

Over the last year we have therefore carried out detailed reviews of a number of services across Clyde, including maternity services. These reviews have been led by frontline staff working closely with local service users.

While there is high demand for the antenatal and postnatal services provided by the Community Maternity Units (CMUs) at Inverclyde Royal and the Vale of Leven Hospitals, the birthing suites at both of these Units are underused. We do not believe this makes effective use of limited NHS resources or best use of the skills of experienced midwives who currently staff these birthing suites 24-hours-a-day.

We therefore want to transfer the birthing suite service from the Inverclyde Royal and Vale of Leven CMUs to the Royal Alexandra Hospital to move to a single midwifery-led birthing suite service for Clyde.

We fully recognise the importance of providing local maternity services which is why, under the proposed new arrangements, all three Community Maternity Units in Clyde would remain open.

This means women from Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire would continue to have access to a wide range of maternity services in their local area including scans, early pregnancy assessment and parenting classes, which account for the vast majority of current visits.

As a result, most women in Clyde would experience no change to their existing service as the proposal would affect around 150 women each year who currently give birth at the Inverclyde Royal and the Vale of Leven Units.

However, we also want to know what you think about this proposed change and I therefore hope that you will take time to read this leaflet and take part in the public consultation.

**Deb den Herder**

Director  
Clyde Acute Services  
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

## Introduction

Over the last year, as part of the wider work to review health services across Clyde, we carried out a review of local maternity services.

This gave us the chance to look afresh at the use and demand for specific services.

During the review a number of community engagement meetings were held across Clyde to give local mums an opportunity to tell us what they thought of existing maternity services. A local group, which had patient and public representatives and midwives from all three Community Maternity Units in Clyde, was also established to explore and assess a number of options for the future.

Our proposals have also been reviewed by an Independent Scrutiny Panel, set up by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing.

This leaflet describes how maternity services are currently provided; explains why existing services need to change; sets out our proposals for the future; and tells you how you can put forward your views.

The public consultation started on 27th March and ends on 19th June 2008.



## What are the current arrangements?

There are three Community Maternity Units (CMUs) in Clyde based at Inverclyde Royal Hospital in Greenock, the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley and the Vale of Leven Hospital in Alexandria. These Units, which are run by midwives, provide a wide range of local maternity services including routine antenatal checks, day care, scans, early pregnancy assessment, parent education and post natal checks.

They also offer a 24-hour birthing suite service for low risk births. This service is suitable for women who have not experienced any problems during pregnancy and expect to have a normal labour and birth.

In addition, women across Clyde can choose to give birth at the consultant-led service at the Royal Alexandra Hospital or at any of the Glasgow maternity hospitals.

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## Why change services?

A recent review of activity at the CMUs showed that, although the Units at Inverclyde Royal and the Vale of Leven are very busy delivering essential day care and outpatient services, their birthing suites are underused. Currently only around one or two babies are born in these Units each week – a far lower number that they were originally designed and staffed to handle.

While there is no question that the care offered by these Units is of the highest standard, the low level of births does not make the best use of staff skills and expertise. It also doesn't make best use of limited NHS resources as 11 midwives are employed at each CMU to staff the birthing suites 24-hours-a-day, regardless of the actual number of births. The lower number of deliveries also means that the cost of giving birth at the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde Royal CMUs is far higher than originally predicted and three times the cost of giving birth at the Royal Alexandra CMU.

We also have to recognise that because of the high levels of poor health in Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire, many mums are simply not able to opt for a CMU birth. Of those who do, around 70% end up being transferred to other facilities at some stage during pregnancy or are transferred during labour. In fact, a recent audit showed that one in three women admitted to the birthing suites at the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde Royal are transferred in labour to the Royal Alexandra Hospital as they require consultant care. In addition, many women who are able to give birth in a CMU choose to give birth at maternity hospitals elsewhere in Greater Glasgow and Clyde.



## The proposed way forward

A local group, which had patient and public representatives and midwives from all three Community Maternity Units in Clyde, was set up to carry out the review of local maternity services.

After exploring and assessing a number of possible options, they recommended that the birthing suite service from the Inverclyde Royal and Vale of Leven CMUs should transfer to the Royal Alexandra Hospital to create a single midwifery-led birthing suite service for Clyde. This option came out top as it maximises the use of resources and avoids the need to transfer women from the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde Royal Units during labour.

Under this arrangement the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde Royal CMUs would remain open and continue to provide essential local maternity services which account for the vast majority of current activity. For example, in 2006 there were more than 14,000 episodes of care provided locally from the Vale of Leven CMU and 20,000 episodes of care from the Inverclyde CMU for routine antenatal checks, day care, scans, early pregnancy assessment, parent education and post natal checks.

As a result, most women in Clyde would experience no change to their existing service as the proposal would affect around 150 women each year who currently give birth at the Inverclyde Royal and the Vale of Leven Units.

There would be no job losses as staff affected by the transfer of the birthing suite services would be offered redeployment opportunities across Greater Glasgow and Clyde.



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The Independent Scrutiny Panel, which was set up to review a number of our proposed changes to health services across Clyde, praised the quality of the detailed work undertaken by local staff involved in carrying out the review of maternity services. They acknowledged that the birthing suite facilities at the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde Royal CMUs were unused for much of the time and accepted that there was a financial case for change.

The Panel asked us to consider a number of recommendations. These included revising the risk criteria for giving birth in a CMU and running the birthing suite service at the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde Royal CMUs for a further three years.

The criteria for giving birth in a CMU is based on national guidance and we do not believe that these standards should be relaxed in an attempt to increase the number of women who might be able to deliver in a CMU.

We also do not believe that keeping the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde Royal birthing suite service open for a further three years would lead to a significant increase in the number of women giving birth at these Units. This is because both CMUs serve areas where there are high levels of poverty and deprivation which, in turn, are linked to poor health. As a result, many local women require to be admitted to a consultant-led unit for clinical safety.

Tackling these problems takes time and we therefore believe that, unless there is a dramatic change in the levels of deprivation, this factor will continue to prevent many local women in Inverclyde and West

Dunbartonshire from giving birth in a CMU.

In addition, many women from Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire choose to give birth at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley where they can access consultant-led obstetric and anaesthetic care, including an epidural, if they require it. The relatively close proximity of the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde Royal CMUs to the Royal Alexandra Hospital makes them different from CMUs in more rural areas which are often some distance from consultant-led Units. These differences also make it more difficult to compare the CMUs in Clyde with those in other parts of the country.

Taking all of these factors into account, the proposal to have a single midwifery-led birthing suite for Clyde, based at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley, remains our preferred option.

We would, however, like to hear what you think about all of these issues. We are also committed to carrying out an audit during the consultation period on the factors and choices which determine where women give birth. The results of this audit will be reported to the Board along with the outcome of consultation.



## What would the changes mean?



### *The proposals would:*

- Ensure all three Community Maternity Units in Clyde remain open
- Mean there would be a single birthing suite for Clyde, based at the Royal Alexandra Hospital
- Ensure women from Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire continue to receive the vast majority of their maternity care locally, including antenatal checks and scans
- Affect around 150 women each year who currently give birth at the Inverclyde Royal and the Vale of Leven Units – the vast majority of women in Clyde will experience no change to their existing service
- Ensure that women across Clyde still have the option to deliver in a midwife-led birthing suite
- Make more effective use of limited NHS resources
- Make better use of midwifery skills and experience
- Generate saving to contribute towards the £30m financial recovery plan for Clyde

## Tell us what you think

This consultation was launched by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde on 27th March 2008 and a copy of the fully consultation paper can be obtained from our website ([www.nhsggc.org.uk/clydematernity](http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/clydematernity)) or by calling 0800 027 7246 during normal office hours.

The full consultation document contains more detail on the four main options assessed and sets out why, after a detailed review, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's preferred option is to transfer the current birthing suite services from the Inverclyde Royal and Vale of Leven CMUs to a single midwifery led birthing suite service for Clyde, based at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley.

The consultation document invites comments on the Board's analysis and provides opportunity to challenge our proposal. It also asks for views on the full range of options which we have considered and invites feedback on any other options that have not been considered.

Comments on all aspects of the consultation paper are welcome. You can either email your comments to us at: [clydematernity@nhsggc.org.uk](mailto:clydematernity@nhsggc.org.uk) or write to:- John Hamilton, Head of Board Administration  
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde  
Dalian House, 350 St Vincent Street  
Glasgow, G3 8YZ



## Consultation Meetings



A number of drop-in sessions specifically aimed at service users have been organised. These will be held in the CMUs and at facilities used by women who may be affected by the proposed change. These will be publicised locally and women who attended previous community engagement events will also be invited to participate.

### **CMU DROP-IN SESSIONS FOR LOCAL WOMEN AND SERVICE USERS**

#### **Wed 7th May**

9.30am – 12.30pm IRH CMU

2.00pm – 5.00pm VOL CMU

#### **Wed 21st May**

9.30am – 12.30pm VOL CMU

2.00pm – 5.00pm IRH CMU

If you are interested in attending a public meeting based on workshop discussions about these proposals, please let us know by calling 0800 027 7246. We are flexible as to the date, time and format of such an event and will base the arrangements according to the level of demand and type of requests we receive.

If you would like this information in a different language or format (e.g. large print or audio cassette) please contact 0141 201 4915.

**The consultation will end on 19th June 2008**

**If you would like this document in Braille or audio-tape format, please contact:**

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