

Improving maternity services in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

We want to help everyone
to have the best start in life.

We want to provide high
quality maternity services
that offer choice and the
right care for you.



EASY READ

July 2021

Who we are and what this is about



Together We're Better is the health and care partnership for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Since 2016, we have been working to make health and care better for everyone who lives here.



We are proud of our health and social care services. But we know there is more that can still be done to make services better.



We started talking to you about **maternity services** (caring for people who are having a baby) in 2019. This work had to stop during **COVID-19** (coronavirus).



Now we can start again, but we know a lot has changed. We want to listen to people who use and work in these services.

Maternity care in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent



Over 11,000 babies are born in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent every year. Our staff (midwives and doctors) do an amazing job caring for you when you have a baby.

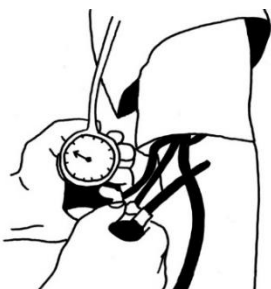


At around 36 or 37 weeks pregnant, your midwife will assess your **risk of problems** (like needing a Caesarean operation or bleeding a lot after birth).



You will probably be **low-risk** if:

- You are healthy and had no problems so far
- You've had a baby before with no problems.



You will probably be **high-risk** if:

- You have a long-term condition like diabetes
- You've had a baby before with some problems.



You can discuss your options with your midwife when you write your **birth plan**.



There are 2 **Consultant-led Units** at Royal Stoke University Hospital and Queen's Hospital, Burton. They are the only places suitable for high-risk pregnancies. Doctors and specialist staff will be there if you or your baby need any help during or after the birth.



There are 2 **Midwife-led Units/services** – also at Stoke and Burton. They are only suitable for low-risk pregnancies. Lots of women choose to give birth at these units. The rooms feel less like a hospital, but are next to the Consultant-led Unit if they need any help.



There are 2 more **Midwife-led Units** at County Hospital, Stafford and Samuel Johnson Community Hospital, Lichfield. They are not next to the Consultant-led Units, so if you need help, you and your baby would be taken to another hospital by ambulance. Not many women choose to give birth at these units, so this is not a good use of our midwives.



A **homebirth** is also suitable for low-risk pregnancies. Your midwife comes to you, and it means you can have family around you. If you have had a baby before and are low-risk, homebirths and Midwife-led Units are just as safe as each other.



NO BIRTHS

During COVID-19, there were times when a lot of our staff were not able to work. It was important to keep staff and patients safe. We stopped births at Stafford and Lichfield hospitals for a while.



This was so our staff could be used in the best way – where most of the babies were being born. We also stopped homebirths for a while, but they are now available again.



Thank you to the staff who worked really hard to keep services running, and to the families who understood why we had to make these changes.

What's new?



COVID-19 is still with us and we're still having to use our staff in a different way to help deliver safe services for everyone. We're looking at ways to restart services, but also how we make them better.



Providing safe care for women and babies is the most important thing to us. Having all our midwives in Stoke and Burton is the best way to use our staff as this is where most women choose to give birth.



Some things that changed during COVID-19 have been better for the people who use and work in our services. We want to keep doing the things that are working well.



We have also looked at the **Ockenden review** into maternity services in Shropshire to make sure our services are the best they can be.

What we want to do



We want to give the best support to you and your family when you're having a baby.

We want to help you choose where to give birth, have a good experience of maternity services and a healthy baby.

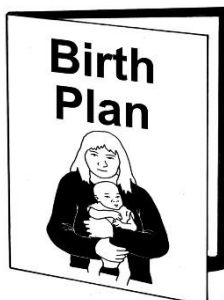


We want to provide a **network of places** where you can choose to give birth. These will be high quality and safe, have the right staff and be a good use of money.



We want you to have access to a team of midwives who provide **continuity of care**.

This means you would see the same people all the way through your pregnancy.



We want to give you a birth plan that is right for you. We want to have digital records which can be updated by you and your midwife.

How we think we can do this



We want to set up **on-demand midwife-led units**, led by our teams of midwives.

- Small teams of midwives would be based in the community. When your baby is on the way, they would meet you at your agreed place and have everything ready.
- You will have access to birthing rooms and birthing pools. You will have the same level of care as a homebirth.
- This gives low-risk women more choice over where to give birth.



We want to make our **homebirth** service better so that more women might choose to give birth at home.



We want to do more of our tests and appointments (before and after the birth) in the community instead of in hospitals.



You should not notice a difference to your maternity care, because a lot of these changes are about how we use our staff.



There is no change to Consultant-led services. These would stay where they are at Stoke and Burton.



There is no change in what happens if you have any problems. We work closely with the ambulance service to safely move you to the Consultant-led Unit if needed.



We are looking at ways we can start offering low-risk births at County Hospital, Stafford and Samuel Johnson Community Hospital, Lichfield. We hope we will be able to offer a service by **late autumn or winter 2021**.

**OPEN AUTUMN
/ WINTER 2021**

Why do things need to change?



Doctors, midwives, women and their families have told us what challenges they face locally, that we need to plan for now.



Across the country, there are not enough midwives.



Before COVID-19, not enough babies were being born at the Stafford and Lichfield units. It was not a good use of their time or skills to be there 24 hours a day.



We know that it is better for you to see the same small team of midwives all the way through your pregnancy. This means we need to have more midwives working in the community.

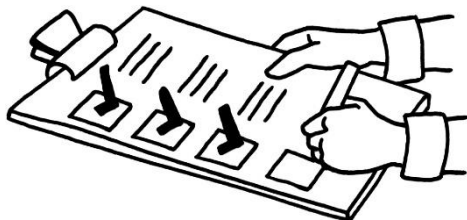
How we listened to you



Over the last few years, we have been talking to people who use our services, our staff and local community groups. We asked what services were like when they used them, and their ideas for how things could be done better. We have used what you have told us as we have thought about how services could look in the future.



Most of the people we spoke to said maternity services were working well, and that staff were very caring and supportive.



But things that needed to be better included:

- Seeing the same people every time
- Access to support services
- Shared medical records
- More services closer to home
- Communication.

Next steps



OPEN

We are working on our ideas for how on-demand services could work.

This includes looking at how we can start offering births at Stafford and Lichfield again.



We are listening to people who use, work in or support maternity services.

We want to know:

- What you think about what has changed since COVID-19.
- What maternity services were like for you during COVID-19.
- If there is anything else we need to think about when we design our new services.



To have your say, please answer our online survey before midnight on 8 August 2021:

www.twbstaffsandstoke.org.uk/get-involved/maternity-services-transformation



We also held an online event on 16 July for people to share their views. Thank you to everyone who joined in.



We will keep you updated as we work on our ideas. The NHS hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups will look at the feedback from the survey and event. We will also put updates on our website.

**Autumn /
winter
2021**

There is more work needed before we will know if this way of working can happen. The earliest we could reopen services are autumn/winter 2021 – depending on COVID-19.



If you want to get involved in shaping local maternity services, you can join our **Maternity Voices Partnership**. To find out more, visit our website or contact us.

We want to provide high quality maternity services that offer choice and the right care for you. This booklet is a summary of the work we are doing in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, and how you can share your feedback. **If you need more information, if you need this in another format, or if you need help to do the survey, please contact us:**



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