

Notes from Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)
Friday 20th July 2018, 10:00am
County Hall Worcester

The Chair, County Councillor Paul Tuthill (Con, Malvern Link) opened the meeting and following the usual procedures moved to the election of the Vice Chairman. Cllr Frances Smith (Con, Little Hampton) from Wychavon District Council was returned unopposed. Cllr Fran Oborski MBE (Lib Dem, Offmore & Comberton, Wyre Forest DC) praised Cllr Smith for her hard work and service to the committee.

The focus of this meeting was the Local Maternity System (LMS), which was put in place across Herefordshire & Worcestershire as a requirement in statute and falling within the Sustainability & Transformation Partnership (STP). This means the LMS spans a large area and is afforded a degree of autonomy as to meet its objectives, which are:

- To reduce still birth, neonatal death, maternal death and brain injury by 20% by 2020 and by 50% by 2025.
- Reduction in smoking at birth to less than 6% by 2022
- Reduction in pre-term births to 6% by 2025
- Increase in continuity of carer (20% by 2019 with local target of 10%)
- Midwife led care (70% by 2022)

HOSC was asked to note the LMS, which has been approved by various bodies however has a £10m funding gap as it stands. A report is due in September to examine the drivers around this gap. Financial support from the CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups) has been requested.

Points in brief:

- Two 'Maternity Hubs' are in operation: Kidderminster and Leominster
- The Redditch 'Maternity Hub' is in partial operation. Based in the Alex it is the centralised location of all things maternity, apart from birthing, such as scanning, pre-natal care and post-natal follow-ups.
- Worcestershire Royal Hospital is 'fully staffed' for midwifery, which was noted as being against a national scene that is struggling to fill posts.
- Members of HOSC questioned the NHS staff present on a number of points. Cllr Rouse asked about the 'Maternity Hub' at the Alex and when people might be told of its existence - this will be when more services are moved into the hub and the service feels confident in referring to the unit fully as Maternity Hub. Cllr Rouse also asked whether a maternity-led birthing unit was a consideration - and was told it is not.
- Members also generally raised concern in particular about the prevalence of smoking in pregnancy and encouraged the LMS and Trust persons present to do more. Members were informed that work is ongoing - for instance smoking cessation services remain within the Trust and haven't been cut, and that nudges at points of contact were being introduced.
- On the specific issue of increased rates in Redditch (though not strictly part of the agenda) the Trust and County staff confirmed in response to Cllr Rouse that additional outreach work to so-called blue collar workers in the Redditch area will be carried out focusing on an app that nudges changes in behaviour - apparently there is data to suggest this app is effective amongst so-called blue collar workers.
- Healthwatch Worcestershire were welcomed to speak at the conclusion of the presentation. They commented that they felt HOSC member questions were "spot on" in terms of areas of interest and that Healthwatch Worcestershire welcomes the LMS as proposed.

- After the close of the meeting there was a short work planning session at which Cllr Rouse asked that HOSC looks at the issue of smoking cessation services and efforts across the county.

Figures and stats to note:

All of the detailed figures and plans can be found in the public papers on the WCC website. Below is a summary of those figures:

- In the 2015/16 period there were 1827 births in the Redditch & Bromsgrove CCG area. This compares to 2887 in South Worcestershire, 1146 in Wyre Forest, and 1658 for Herefordshire. 84% of the births in the Redditch & Bromsgrove CCG area were conducted within the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (WAHT) area.
- In the period 2016/17 there were 105 home births in the LMS area (Herefordshire & Worcestershire)
- Smoking in pregnancy stands at 11.7% for the LMS area compared to 10.5% for England and the 6% target. (Red)
- Breastfeeding initiation is at 69.5% for the LMS area compared to 74.3% for England (Red)
- Obesity rates are at 22.3% compared to 20.0% for England. (Amber)
- Teenage pregnancy is at 15.8% compared to 20.8% for England. (Green)
- Caesarean sections are at 29.4% compared to 26.3% for England (Red)
- Neonatal death is at 3.4% compared to 2.7% for England (Red)
- Stillbirth rate is 4.9% compared to 4.6% for England (Amber)
- Maternal death is at 0% compared to 0.39% for England (Green)
- Premature birth rate is at 91.6% compared to 78.4% for England (Red)
- Low birth weight rate is at 8.2% compared to 7.4% for England (Red)

The data above is obviously concerning and the LMS plans go into detail about how these will be addressed. It is worth noting that Members did pick up on these points, challenge around them, and that Healthwatch Worcestershire has scrutinised these plans also and welcomed the LMS as per their plans formally at the HOSC meeting.

The papers noted some drivers to the figures such as how the LMS area has:

- Higher than average smoking at booking and variations in services across the LMS area
- A Polish speaking population that is hard to reach
- A transport-deprived rural population
- A higher than average obese population
- Higher than average older mothers delivering
- Clinical variation in clinical teams
- Lower than national average breastfeeding (though above average beyond the 6 week period)
- Above average diabetes
- Above average depression rates

It was also noted as part of the LMS work that referrals to alcohol and drug dependency services was "very low", indicating this particular issue does not need to be a priority focus.

Councillor Mike Rouse, former representative on Worcestershire HOSC