

Report to September 2023 Meeting of CBC Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Summary of July 2023 Meeting of GCC Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

A full recording of this meeting is available in the “Online meetings” section of the GCC website. The public information pack which includes all presentations is also available on this website. The minutes are not yet available, so this paper is based solely on notes I took at the time.

1. Scrutiny Items

1.1 Maternity Services - Update on Staffing Issues and Extension of Temporary Changes

In summary a shortage of midwives has led GHFT to conclude that the Aveta birthing unit at CGH should remain closed for labour and births along with six post-natal beds at Stroud maternity unit.

A CQC report in 2022 highlighted lack of staff in rating the maternity service as inadequate. Staffing levels remain a challenge and midwifery staffing is still on the risk register as it remains impossible to meet the required ratio of midwives per birth 100% of the time. There are 30.4WTE vacancies, that's 14% of the total and sadly those numbers are currently on an upwards trajectory.

The national picture also remains gloomy with newly qualified staff receiving an average of 4 job offers.

The unit at CGH has been closed for labour and births since April 5th last year and six post-natal beds in Stroud have been closed since October 1st. These closures were reviewed as planned in January but high vacancy and sickness absence rates had persisted so it was concluded that the closure needed to continue at least until a further review in April when it was hoped that a new staffing model would have been agreed with some tasks currently being undertaken solely by midwives being re-assigned to non-midwifery staff specifically trained to take them on. However, this model has yet to be agreed and implemented. It is now hoped to do this in time for a report back to the September HOSC meeting.

If enough progress has been made towards developing new attendance methods that don't rely on 1 to 1 midwife to ratios, plans for re-opening Aveta and Stroud can be made but at the moment staff need to be concentrated in other areas to ensure all 6000 births p.a. in the County can happen in safe, adequately staffed facilities.

It should also be noted that GHNHSFT have just obtained £2.7M of capital funding to upgrade the Aveta unit. Decant arrangements would need to be put in place to implement this scheme so it may make sense to carry out the scheme before the unit reopens depending on how quickly plans can be finalised and the work undertaken.

2. Information Items – see presentations for full details:

2.1 Gloucestershire Integrated Care System (ICS) Performance Report

- Patients waiting for planned care have risen by another 6899 to the very high total of 79,136 and is set to rise still higher.

- 2512 waiting over 52 weeks up from 1795 in April but over 18-month (78 week) waiters remain eliminated. Also GHNHSFT performance of only 3 per 1000 waiting over 52 weeks is the best in the South-West.
- ED & MIU performance remain slightly better than the national average but ambulance response times are particularly for Cat 2 (less urgent) patients.
- Worrying figures NHS 111 calls were reported with 25% abandoned at weekends and 10% during the week.
- Waits for mental health services for children and young people remain high across all providers.
- More positively most Cancer Waiting Times targets are now being met. However the 62 day referral to treatment target of 85% of patients seen in that time frame is currently at 74% an improvement of 10% from my previous report but still well below target.

2.2 NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) Update – this report is now divided into 3 sections

- Section 1 an update on national and local commissioning issues
- Section 2 an update on primary care issues from the commissioner perspective
- Section 3 an update from the 3 provider Trusts; Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust (GHC), Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHT) and South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWAST)
- Of note from the GHNHSFT report. The new day surgery unit at CGH is now open and fully functional as is the much-improved radiology department.

2.3 Digital Health and Care Gloucestershire 2022-25

This paper talked a lot about what could be done with technology and plans to develop strategies to move things forward but didn't say much as far as I could gather about exactly would actually happen and precisely when we could hope to see things getting implemented. Hopefully you will be able to glean more from it than me.