



Response to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Consultation document: **Right Service, Right Place**

Please write or email to:

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The Belfast Trust in its public consultation document New Directions outlined key principles it determined were necessary to protect the dignity and rights of women giving birth in Belfast.

These were:

- Choice in how and where to give birth
- Continuity of care during child birth
- Control of maternity care based on clinical advice

These principles cannot be reconciled with the Trusts current proposal to end 'in patient' obstetric services in the Mater Hospital and transfer these services to the Royal Hospital site. The Mater Hospital has provided maternity services to the greater North Belfast population since its inception. At present 5% of all Belfast births take place in the Mater Maternity. 92% of births at the Mater are to women from North and West Belfast. It is also the first choice of over 400 women from other health

trusts, particularly to women from the Northern Board, who choose the Mater for a variety of reasons, including historic, but also because of the lack of maternity provision in their own areas. At present women who choose to give birth at the Mater Hospital can expect to avail of:

- Choice in Ante Natal Care with an either an obstetrician or mid wife
- Care during their labour
- Daytime consultant obstetric care
- Daytime junior obstetrician care
- On call out of hours obstetrician care
- 1:1 midwifery care in labour
- Postnatal in patient care
- Access to theatres and anaesthetics

In its current consultation document Right service, Right Place Belfast Trust puts forward 3 options for the future of Maternity Services at the Mater Hospital. These options are:

#### Option 1

Keep Consultant-led services at the Royal-Jubilee Maternity Service and Mater Hospital. This includes having Midwife-led care too.

#### Option 2

Have one Consultant-led service and an alongside Midwife-led Unit at the Royal-Jubilee Maternity Service only

#### Option 3

Have one Consultant-led service plus Midwife-led care, at the Royal-Jubilee Maternity Service and a freestanding Midwife-led Unit at the Mater Hospital.

The Trust recommends that Option 3 is the best because they claim it will give women more choices for Maternity care by having a freestanding Midwife Unit and make things safer for all women by bringing Consultant care into one unit at the Royal Maternity Hospital.

UNISON supports Option 1.

UNISON believes:

- It best meets the needs of women and their partners
- It protects local accessible maternity provision for women
- It keeps all options and choices available
- The other Trust proposals put the long term viability of the Mater under threat
- Consultant care, for those who need it, available on both sites is the best option
- It is the option supported by midwives at the Mater Hospital
- The new maternity hospital at the Royal is years from completion
- The Royal is currently under special measures
- There is no need to take this decision until the new maternity hospital is open

Belfast Trust claims of safety at the Mater need to be addressed and should be addressed by investment rather than the closure of services.

We fear that the Belfast Trust which has to save £35 million this year will use the clinical safety issue as cover for saving money whenever it can.

The best option for women and their families must not be prejudiced by the perennial financial crisis that they did nothing to create.