

FM's Hot Issues Brief: Health, Social Care & Early Years

Pre Autumn Term (5 September 2024)

Contents:

1. Independent Review of Maternity and Neonatal Service in Swansea Bay UHB

Background:

On 25 June 2024, Swansea Bay UHB announced a new interim chair Dr Denise Chaffer for the oversight panel for the Independent Review of maternity and neonatal services in Swansea following the resignation of the appointed chair. The interim appointment was initially for three months but has subsequently been extended.

The role of the oversight panel is to undertake an ongoing assurance process of the review process, providing independent scrutiny to ensure the Review is completed in line with its Terms of Reference. The Review has three parts: a review of clinical outcomes, a review of patient and staff experience and a review of leadership and governance. The Review is supported by an engagement lead who will ensure that service user and staff voices are heard throughout the review process.

The final Terms of Reference for the review were published on 12 June 2024 following the input of service users and staff during a listening period. The health board has recently written to stakeholders including the Welsh Government and member of the Senedd with an update on progress, which highlighted:

- Family and Community Voices Steering Group is in the process of being established.
- Communications between the review team and Llais are being enhanced for the duration of the review.
- New independent website and dedicated email address has been established.
- Clinical Review Team – first tranche of review letters were sent out in August to the individuals and families involved in 2022 cases with further tranches of letters will be sent out during September.
- Bereavement and emotional / psychological support is being put in place to support those currently being contacted and those who self-refer.
- Self-referral process for anybody who believes their case should be reviewed is now available (although this has not been publicised yet)
- Comprehensive governance pack has been developed
- Regular updates to be provided to stakeholders and shared on health board and review websites.

Llais are undertaking a survey of service users' experiences of Maternity Services in Swansea Bay until the end of September 2024. An external company will also be facilitating three face-to-face workshops with up to 20 women in each focusing on their experiences of maternity care. The data gathered from the workshops and the survey results will be used by Llais to produce a report in October 2024.

There continues to be strong criticism of the review process from a number of affected families and in the media. Welsh Government recently received correspondence from one of the families indicating the families are not willing to engage with the current review and are looking to undertake their own review using

their stories and the evidence they have gathered. **They have not yet announced their intention publicly, but we anticipate they will do so soon.**

There has also been recent media coverage about one of the families asking the South Wales police to undertake a criminal inquiry into the events surrounding the maternity unit. The police have indicated they are undertaking a fact-finding exercise to identify if there are any potential criminal offences to investigate. We understand the police have been in contact with the health board.

Lines to take:

Independent review

- The health board has commissioned an independent review to assess the quality and safety of its maternity and neonatal services.
- Dr Denise Chaffer is a highly experienced midwife and existing member of the panel overseeing the review. Her appointment as interim Chair ensures the oversight panel can make decisions and discharge its responsibilities in line with the published terms of reference.
- The terms of reference for the review have been published on the health board website, following a listening period with families and staff
- Representatives from the oversight panel and the workstream leads held an engagement event with families giving them an opportunity to raise any questions.

Escalation of maternity and neonatal services in Swansea

- Maternity and neonatal services were escalated to enhanced monitoring by Welsh Government in January following a number of concerns about the service. Welsh Government officials continue to maintain oversight of the health board's maternity and neonatal services. This includes workforce data alongside a number of quality metrics as part of the enhanced monitoring escalation arrangements.

Birthing unit and home birth services

- In May 2024, the health board's management board approved the reopening of the Neath Port Talbot birth centre and the home birth service subject to final approval by the Board. This followed a comprehensive review process involving a number of formal 'gateways' and significant staff input and engagement.
- Following a number of issues raised by one of their recognised Unions, there was a short delay in bringing the formal proposal for the reopening to their Board at a special Board meeting on 10 September. If approved, they would be looking to restart services at the birth centre the following week.

HIW inspections – Singleton hospital

- Healthcare Inspectorate Wales conducted a follow-up unannounced inspection of the Singleton maternity unit in April 2024 and raised three immediate assurances, two of which were completed at the time of the visit. The health board has responded appropriately to the inspection findings which HIW has accepted. The inspection report is scheduled to be published on 18 July.
- We continue to maintain oversight of the health board's delivery of required improvements through the enhanced monitoring escalation arrangements, which includes any actions identified through HIW inspections. The health board has indicated a significant number of actions have been completed but there are a number of actions and provide a full update on progress to their Board in July.

Provided by <redacted>: 30 August 2024

2. <Redacted>

3. <Redacted>

4. <Redacted>

5. <Redacted>

- <Redacted>
- <Redacted>
- <Redacted>