

**SPECIFICATION FOR A NEW CENTRALISED MATERNITY HOSPITAL  
IN BELFAST**

November 2001

## **ONE: INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The services previously provided in the Jubilee and Royal Maternity Hospitals have been combined on one site, to improve care and treatment for mothers and babies by bringing midwives, obstetricians and other specialist staff together.
- 1.2 The combined service is presently located, on a temporary basis, in the former Royal Maternity Hospital, now known as the Royal Jubilee Maternity Service. The future site for a new combined maternity hospital has still to be determined. The Department's aim is to reach a decision that will provide the best and most sustainable maternity services for women, mothers and babies in the years to come.
- 1.3 In assessing possible options, the Department will be mindful of the dual role of the combined unit. The combined unit will not only provide a local maternity service for the population of its natural catchment area, but will also serve as the regional specialist tertiary referral service accepting referrals from throughout Northern Ireland of the most high-risk pregnancies.
- 1.4 In order to arrive at a decision that provides the best possible solution, the Department intends to invite the Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust to develop proposals for siting the combined unit on their respective sites. These proposals should take account of, and demonstrate how they meet, the following criteria and illustrate any particular advantages that they may offer. Completed proposals will be scrutinised by the Department to ensure that they address the service specification. It is the responsibility of each Trust to ensure that its proposals meet the criteria. However, the Department reserves the right to seek further clarification where appropriate.
- 1.5 Recognising that the building cost for a new maternity hospital is likely to be similar regardless of site and that proposals will be subject to change, Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust will not be required to develop detailed plans or costings at this stage. Health Estates will provide an outline cost and building specification for a new maternity hospital and will consider the potential additional, unique costs of building a new maternity hospital on the respective sites, taking account of site conditions.
- 1.6 It is a common goal of all parties to develop the best possible service for mothers and babies in the years to come. Recognising this common objective the Department has asked Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust to work together with commissioners and clinicians in order to develop a joint description of the core services to be provided by the new maternity hospital. In addition Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trusts should each seek to demonstrate the particular advantages in terms of service delivery and linkages to related services, which they feel their site has to offer.

## **TWO: AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1 The Government's overall aims for maternity services are set out in the circular: *The Commissioning and Provision of Maternity Services: Policy Guidelines, 1996*. The services provided at the new combined maternity unit must meet these aims, which are summarized below.

### ***Safety for mothers and babies***

- 2.1.1 For the majority of mothers, giving birth is a normal experience that takes place without the need for complex medical treatment for either mother or child. Where difficulties or complications arise, it is important to have available a range of specialized medical services including obstetrics, neonatology, gynaecology, paediatrics and anaesthetics.

### ***High quality care and treatment***

- 2.1.2 The service must aim to provide care and treatment of the highest possible quality, meeting recognized standards of good practice. The quality of maternity services depends largely on the availability of suitably qualified and skilled staff and the right environment to minimize risk whilst offering choice of care. The combined maternity unit must comply with relevant professional and statutory guidelines and standards.

### ***A woman-centred service***

- 2.1.3 Maternity services should be woman-centred. A woman-centred service is defined as one in which:
- women are asked what they want and levels of satisfaction are tested;
  - the service has the support of women who use it; and
  - the service produces good clinical outcomes for both mothers and babies.

### ***Choice***

- 2.1.4 Maternity services should encourage women to state their preferences regarding the type of care they receive, and the professionals who care for them. Wherever possible these preferences should be met.

### ***Communication***

- 2.1.5 Women must be given clear, comprehensive and unbiased information about the care available. They must feel free to raise any concerns, and have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

### ***Women should be partners in decision making***

- 2.1.6 Women giving birth should feel that they are in control of what is happening to them, and able to make decisions about their care.

### ***They should ensure continuity of care and of carer***

- 2.1.7 The organization and staffing of services should provide a flexible programme of care delivered by known and trusted carers.

### **Further objectives**

- 2.2 In addition to the general aims above, which apply to all maternity services, there are three further objectives that must be taken into account. These are set out below.

### ***A lasting solution***

- 2.2.1 The new unit must be capable of meeting the needs of mothers and babies for many years to come. The services to be provided must be able to respond to improvements in practice, the development of new technology, and changing demand.

### ***Regional services***

- 2.2.3 The combined maternity unit will provide a specialist tertiary referral service for Northern Ireland. In this capacity the unit will provide care for high-risk maternal and perinatal conditions requiring access to sub-speciality care. The regional unit will provide access to a range of high quality specialist services, train new clinicians and conduct excellent research and audit.

### ***Best use of resources***

- 2.2.4 The new unit must make the best possible use of accommodation, skilled staff and money to provide effective, efficient and high quality services.

### ***Providing a range of services***

- 2.2.5 As a centralized maternity service for those areas previously served by the Royal and Jubilee Maternity Hospitals, the combined unit should seek to deliver the full range of maternity services from midwife to consultant led care.
- 2.2.6 Maternity services led by midwives and/or GPs have an important role to play in offering greater choice, control and continuity of care for women. In 1994, the report of the Maternity Unit Study Group entitled *Delivering Choice* recommended the development of maternity units led by midwives and/or GPs.
- 2.2.7 The Eastern Health and Social Services Board, the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust and the Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust will consider the opportunities for such an initiative in the light of the eventual decision on where the new combined maternity unit will be located.

### **THREE: BUILDING SPECIFICATION AND COST**

- 3.1 Recognising that the building cost for a new maternity hospital is likely to be similar regardless of site and that proposals will be subject to change, Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust will not be required to develop detailed plans or costings at this stage.
- 3.2 Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals will refer to Health Estates for a projected cost and building specification for a new maternity hospital. Health Estates will provide an outline cost and specification based upon the current configuration of maternity services.
- 3.3 On 31 July 2000, the Minister announced that she was setting up an independent review group on acute hospital services. The Report of the Acute Hospitals Review Group was published in June 2001 and has made a number of recommendations about the profile of acute hospital services in Northern Ireland. If implemented these recommendations are likely to have significant implications for the future usage of a new maternity hospital, particularly in terms of capacity and the geographical spread of the new maternity hospital's local catchment population. Health Estates will provide an outline cost and specification based upon the possible implications of the Report of the Acute Hospitals Review.
- 3.4 Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust will provide a site map demonstrating a proposed location for the new maternity hospital on their respective sites. Health Estates will consider the potential additional, unique costs of building a new maternity hospital on the respective sites, taking account of site conditions.

## **FOUR: THE CORE SERVICE**

- 4.1 This process will seek to develop the best and most sustainable maternity services for women, mothers and babies in the years to come. In order to facilitate this objective the Department will ask Belfast City HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust to work together to develop a joint outline of the core services to be delivered in the centralised maternity hospital.
- 4.2 This will require a collaborative approach with Belfast City Hospital HSS Trusts and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust working together to outline the essential core services which will include:
- Obstetric service
  - Midwifery service
  - Neonatology
  - Antenatal care

## **FIVE:            ADDITIONAL SERVICES**

- 5.1    Belfast City Hospital and the Royal Group of Hospitals provide other specialist services that are related to maternity services. In deciding the way forward it is important to consider the links to such services which proposals may provide. It is equally important to consider the impact upon those services which proposals may have.
- 5.2    In developing proposals Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust will outline those related services currently provided on their respective sites and should seek to demonstrate the particular advantages in terms of service delivery and linkages to related services, which they feel their site has to offer. This should as far as possible include an evidence-based assessment of the need for service linkages, based on historical patterns and level of activity, statistical information, clinical guidelines and recommendations and relevant research findings. This should take particular account of the combined unit's role as the Regional Centre providing care for high-risk maternal and perinatal conditions.
- 5.3    In particular, Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust should separately consider the following services:
- Gynaecology – including pregnancy related gynaecology, elective gynaecology, and gynaecology cancer
  - Intensive care / High dependency care
  - Specialised paediatric services
  - Sub-fertility services
  - Accident and Emergency
- 5.4    Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust should each outline the possible implications for these services and how they propose to deliver or access these services in the following scenarios:
- the centralised maternity hospital is on the Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust site;
  - the centralised maternity hospital is on the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust site;

## **SIX: A REGIONAL UNIT**

- 6.1 The combined maternity unit will provide a specialist tertiary referral service for Northern Ireland. In this capacity the unit will provide care for high-risk maternal and perinatal conditions requiring access to sub-speciality care. The unit will provide high quality specialist services, train new clinicians and conduct excellent research and audit.
- 6.2 To provide an effective service for critical maternal, foetal and neonatal conditions, adult intensive care / high dependency care and regional paediatric services are essential clinical linkages.

## **SEVEN: ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS**

7.1 Given the dual role of the unit, proposals will be evaluated separately against the combined unit's role as a local service for Belfast and as a regional maternity unit. Evaluation of the options will centre on the following areas:

- **Clinical Effectiveness**
  - Safe for mothers and babies
  - Effective linkages
  - Effective clinical outcomes
  
- **Quality of Care**
  - High quality care and treatment
  - A women centred service
  - Offer choice
  - Good Communication
  - Partnership in decision making
  - Continuity of care and of carer
  
- **Ease of Implementation**
  
- **Equality Issues**
  
- **Acceptability of Site to Users**
  
- **Acceptability of Site to General Public**

- 7.2 Proposals received from Belfast City Hospital HSS Trusts and the Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust will be made subject to a 12-week period of public consultation. From week eight of the consultation period, the Department will publish responses on its website, to allow respondees to take account of any new issues raised and give them the opportunity to add to or amend their responses if necessary.
- 7.3 The final decision will be taken by the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
- 7.4 In making her decision the Minister will have available a summary of responses to the consultation exercise, a high-level economic assessment and an equality impact assessment of the proposals. The Minister will also be advised by Departmental officials and professional officers and will meet with representatives of the interested parties in advance of making her decision.