

## Extra information in response to queries at HOSC meeting 10 March 2022

1. HOSC members asked for more detail behind the current **temporary suspension of services at 2 of OUH's 6 midwifery-led units (MLUs)** and the reasons for this.

At the time of the HOSC meeting, OUH was hoping to resume these services by the end of March 2022 but this has not been possible.

The statement below was sent to the HOSC Policy Officer on 21 March to be shared with the HOSC Chair and members:

Alison Cuthbertson, Director of Midwifery at OUH, and Catherine Greenwood, Clinical Director for Maternity at OUH, said: "We are very sorry for the ongoing inconvenience we know the temporary closure of the Wantage and Chipping Norton midwifery-led units (MLUs) has caused women and their families.

"Unfortunately, due to continuing staffing constraints, we are unable to re-open these sites at this time. We are disappointed that this remains the case and are sorry that the situation has stayed the same for some time.

"We aim to re-open these units as soon as we can do so safely. Although we hoped that a date could be set by now, absences, mostly due to COVID-19, remain very high.

"Thank you to our hardworking staff for continuing to provide safe care to women and for their ongoing support of families who are being cared for at our other sites."

Additional information for further context:

- In response to pressures, OUH has redeployed midwifery staff from non-clinical roles wherever possible to maximise the number of staff available. This has meant that the Trust has had to consolidate services to ensure safe patient care. Other maternity units in the NHS are experiencing similar pressures.
- Other low risk birth services across Oxfordshire remain unchanged. There is the Horton General Hospital MLU in Banbury, north Oxfordshire, and Wallingford Maternity and Birthing Centre (MLU) in the south.
- These run alongside the Oxford Spires MLU at the John Radcliffe Hospital.
- The Home Birth service is running as usual.
- Women should call their community midwife if they have any queries or concerns.
- An announcement will be made when a date for reopening is finalised.

2. HOSC members asked for more information about **staff sickness absence rates** and **nursing vacancy rates**.

- Staff absence data and vacancy data are both published in our Trust Board papers – within the Integrated Performance Report (IPR). The latest IPR for the last Trust Board meeting on 9 March is published on the OUH website [here](#). The data are from Month 10 of the 2021/22 financial year (January 2022) – key information relating to staff sickness absence and vacancies as follows:
- OUH staff sickness absence was 4% in January, slightly higher than the Trust's target of 3.1%, due to COVID-19 and the Omicron variant

- Our overall OUH staff vacancy rate was 5.6% in January, better than the Trust's target of 7.7%
- The current vacancy rate for Band 5 Staff Nurses across the Trust is 13.5% and for nursing overall is 8.2%
- Centralised recruitment for all general Band 5 adult nurses and theatre nurses continues, as well as initiatives to engage with and recruit newly qualified nurses from Oxford Brookes University
- Over the last financial year the Trust has welcomed 350 internationally educated nurses which will continue to reduce the vacancy rate as they secure their full Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) registration
- The Trust continues to recruit overseas and is planning to recruit a further 200 nurses to join the Trust between April and December this year