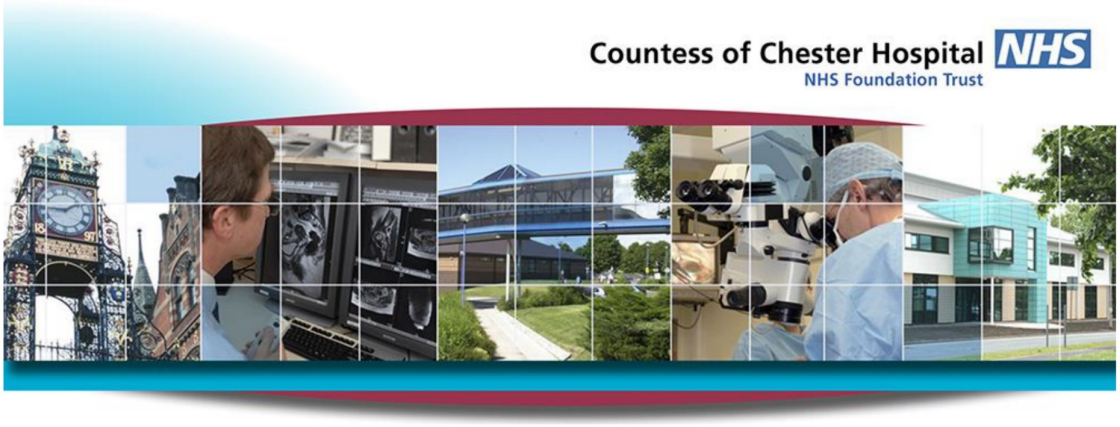

Information from The Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust re neonatal services

FOR EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Thursday 7 July at 2pm

We are temporarily changing the admission arrangements for our neonatal unit to focus predominantly on lower risk babies, who are born after 32 weeks. This decision is being taken with the support of the regional Cheshire and Merseyside Neonatal Care Network.

The hospital had a Care Quality Commission inspection earlier this year (February), and the results published showed no concerns about our outcomes for babies.

Nevertheless, we have seen in some of our most poorly babies (those with high dependency needs) an increase in neonatal mortality rates for 2015 and 2016 compared to previous years. In light of this, we have asked for an independent review of our neonatal service from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and The Royal College of Nursing, which is expected to be completed by the end of August.

While this takes place, we will be closing three intensive care cots at the Chester neonatal unit. A total of 13-cots will continue to provide specialist and high dependency care for newly born and premature babies born at 32-weeks and above.

On an average week, there are 60 babies born in our maternity unit and these changes will only have a direct impact on one or two mums whose delivery is before 32 weeks. For these women the delivery of their babies is most likely to be at Arrowe Park Hospital, in Wirral or another neighbouring unit based on availability managed by the regional network.

We have not taken the decision lightly and we are truly sorry for the inevitable inconvenience that this action will cause. However, it is important for us to fully understand the changes we are seeing in these neonatal mortality rates.

Additional notes in the event of questions you may be asked:

- At this time we are not in a positon to share information about the number of cases. We want to be transparent, but this is sensitive information that forms part of the review and will be published when complete.

Published 2pm Thursday 7 July 2016