FOI 3368

Date 28/11/2024

Dear Requester,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request. Please note, this is a cross-site response for Bedford site and Luton site.

You asked:

1. How many community midwives have reported attending any births (home or hospital) as the main midwife within the past year?

BBA attendances – 44

Total deliveries undertaken – 257

1. How many home births have been managed by the Blossom Homebirth Team each year from 2015 to the present date?

The Blossom Team have kept audits of all pregnant women / birthing people booked onto the homebirth pathway, starting in 2019. This is when the team were first established so we are unable to provide any information from 2015.

In the calendar year 2019 a total of 131 women were booked onto the homebirth team

Out of these 12 women discontinued their care for varying reasons

119 remained \*

Out of these 45 women gave birth in hospital \*

0 ladies had a BBA (Born before arrival of the midwife) \*

**A total of 66 homebirths were achieved. \***

\*1 month of data not available (Feb) due to data not being logged during this month.

In the calendar year 2020 a total of 190 women were booked onto the homebirth team

Out of these 16 women discontinued their care for varying reasons

174 remained

Out of these 81 women gave birth in hospital

2 ladies had a BBA (Born before arrival of the midwife)

**A total of 98 homebirths were achieved.**

In the calendar year 2021 a total of 207 women were booked onto the homebirth team

Out of these 23 women discontinued their care for varying reasons

184 remained

Out of these 70 women gave birth in hospital

5 ladies had a BBA (Born before arrival of the midwife)

**A total of 113 homebirths were achieved.**

\*2 months of data not available (Jan & March) due to data not being logged during this month.

In the calendar year 2022 a total of 176 women were booked onto the homebirth team

Out of these 30 women discontinued their care for varying reasons

146 remained

Out of these 66 women gave birth in hospital

10 ladies had a BBA (Born before arrival of the midwife)

**A total of 61 homebirths were achieved.**

In the calendar year 2023 a total of 158 women were booked onto the homebirth team

Out of these 31 women discontinued their care for varying reasons

127 remained

Out of these 49 women gave birth in hospital

12 ladies had a BBA (Born before arrival of the midwife)

**A total of 64 homebirths were achieved.**

To date – From January 2024 a total of 159 women were booked onto the homebirth team

Out of these 31 women discontinued their care for varying reasons

128 remained

Out of these 43 women gave birth in hospital

6 ladies had a BBA (Born before arrival of the midwife)

**A total of 55 homebirths were achieved.**

**How many years of experience, on average, do the Blossom Homebirth Team midwives have in attending home births? This should include everyone working in the team up until August 31st 2024 from when they joined.**

Of the 4 members of the homebirth team, the average years of experience is approximately 3 years.

1. 2 years, 10 months
2. 3 years
3. 3 years, 4 months
4. 1 year, 5 months

For community staff that were in post prior to the HB team and remain in community to date– These are the midwives who were involved in the homebirth service run by the community teams prior to 2019 and their years of experience in facilitating a homebirth.

1. 5 years
2. 5 years
3. 12 years
4. 2 years
5. 5 years
6. 9 years
7. How many incidents or safety concerns related to home births have been reported in the last five years under the care of the Blossom Homebirth Team? Please also provide in percentages.

103 incidents were logged.

1. How many incidents or safety concerns related to hospital births have been reported in the last five years? Please also provide in percentages.

We are unable to answer this question as this does not provide enough detail in relation to hospital births.

1. How many births have been led by community midwives in the last 5 years? Break down by number of community midwives and frequency E.g between 4 community midwives there has been 20 births led by a community midwife.

Since the start of the Blossom Team in January 2019, community midwives have been allocated as the 2nd midwife to support the homebirth team.

Prior to November 1st 2024, all homebirths were delivered by the homebirth team midwives with the community midwives as a 2nd.

Since November 1st 2024 – 3 Homebirths have been attended and led by the community midwives. (3 RM’s as 1st and 3 RM’s as a 2nd)

1. How many hours per week is the Blossom Homebirth Team available to cover home births (24/7 or otherwise)?

The team cover the following hours/On Calls –

1. 30 hours over 3 days –  1 on call per week,
2. 30 hours over 3 days – 1-2 on calls per week,
3. 22.5 hours per week over 3 days –1 on call per week
4. 30 hours per week over 3 days, 1 on call per week
5. What percentage of community midwives have received specific training on home birth services in the past 12 months?

There is no specific training around facilitating a homebirth for any midwife, as all midwives are trained to support women giving birth (regardless of location) at point of entry to the NMC register. Yearly training is provided around obstetric emergencies including community scenarios.

All community midwives are receiving training including the following:

* Pelvic Health study days
* Bespoke Physiological study sessions
* Obstetric emergencies in the community

1. How many community midwives have been the primary midwives at home births in the past 5 years? Provide numbers for both community midwives and the Blossom Homebirth Team for comparison.

Since the start of the Blossom Team in January 2019, community midwives have been allocated as the 2nd midwife to support the homebirth team.

1. How many community midwives have reported attending any births (home or hospital) as the main midwife within the past year?

BBA attendances – 44

Total deliveries undertaken – 257

1. Will the community midwife service offer the same 24/7 coverage as the current Blossom Homebirth Team? If not, what hours will the service be available?

The community midwives will provide a 24/7 service with 2 midwives on call for the service per day/night.

The service may be suspended at any time if –

1. Another homebirth is ongoing and both on call midwives are in attendance.
2. Escalation into the unit to ensure safe staffing/care to women in labour.
3. Unavoidable sickness which is unable to be covered.
4. What are the planned rest gaps for community midwives, and how will these impact the continuity of homebirth services?

Community midwives will work on average 1 on call per week. If called out to a homebirth, then rest will be allocated the next day. There are 2 midwives rostered every night, 7 days a week.

Homebirth midwives, currently work 1 on call per week, workload can be flexed within the homebirth team, as there are no clinics.

1. What risk assessments have been carried out to evaluate the impact of replacing the Blossom Homebirth Team with community midwives, especially regarding maternal and newborn safety?

All midwives regardless of where they work are trained to provide low risk labour care.

The homebirth team do not receive any other form of training to be able to facilitate a homebirth.

All midwives, regardless of where they work receive the same yearly updates, including neonatal and maternal resuscitation.

Refresher training is being provided to all community midwives and 24/7 support is being provided from team leads, Matron and other members of the homebirth team for as long as required.

1. What data was used to justify the decision to transition homebirth services to community midwives? Provide any relevant statistics.

The Blossom team operate as a continuity of care (CoC) team and for this to be a true CoC team, there needs to be 7-8 midwives managing a caseload of 36 women per WTE (Whole time equivalent). The team are currently at 3 WTE, comprising of 4 part time midwives and are unable to cover the homebirth service 7 days a week. No decision has been made to transition homebirth services to community midwives. The Trust is commissioned to provide a homebirth service, therefore we have a duty to make sure this service is staffed safely 7 days/week.

1. What efforts have been made to recruit additional midwives into the Blossom Homebirth Team over the past 24 months? If any, when was this and for how many positions? Also if any, how many people applied?

The Blossom team operate as a continuity of care (CoC) team and for this to be a true CoC team, there needs to be 7-8 midwives managing a caseload of 36 women per WTE (Whole time equivalent). The team are currently at 3 WTE, comprising of 4 part time midwives.

With 3 WTE in the team, there would be an expectation of a total caseload of 101 women.

HB Team comprised of 5 RM’s = 5 WTE

01/08/2021 – 1 WTE left – Advert put out – 1 application – 1 recruited = 0.6 WTE

14/10/2021 – 1 WTE left – Advert put out – 1 application – 1 recruited = 0.8 WTE

03/01/2022 – 1 Advert put out – 1 application – 1 recruited = 0.8 WTE

03/04/2022 – 1 WTE left – Advert put out – 1 application – 1 recruited = 1 WTE

18/04/2023 – 1 WTE left – Advert put out – 1 application – 1 recruited = 0.96 WTE

24/04/2023 - 1 Advert put out – 1 application – 1 recruited = 0.8 WTE

28/04/2024 – 0.96 WTE left – Not replaced due to low caseload numbers

06/05/2024 – 1 WTE left - – Not replaced due to low caseload numbers

31/10/2024 – 0.8 WTE left - – Not replaced due to low caseload numbers

The caseload numbers for the homebirth team currently fall below this number of, therefore recruitment into this team is not justified at present.

1. Was there any consultation with mothers, families, and the Blossom Homebirth Team before deciding to transition homebirth services to community midwives? If so, please provide the minutes of these consultations.

No decision has been made to transition homebirth services to community midwives. The Trust is commissioned to provide a homebirth service, therefore we have a duty to make sure this service is staffed safely 7 days/week.

We are working with the Blossom Team, external partners, the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP), Trust Board and community staff to come together to provide an options appraisal to present to the Trust board, looking at the best way to provide a homebirth service to all women that is both safe and sustainable.

This information is provided for your personal use and is the property of Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust and subject to any existing Intellectual Property and Database Rights. Any commercial application or use of this information may be subject to the provisions of the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015 (RPSI). This means that if you wish to re-use the information provided for commercial purposes for any reason you must ask the Trust for permission to do so.

Please note that the Trust has a formal internal review and complaints process which is managed by the Information Governance Manager/Data Protection Officer. Should you have any concerns with our response, you can make a formal request for an internal review. Requests for internal review should be submitted within three months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter, and should be addressed to: dataprotectionofficer@ldh.nhs.uk. This option is available to you for up to three calendar months from the date your response was issued.

If you are not satisfied with the Trust review under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 you may apply directly to the Information Commissioners Officer (ICO) for a review of your appeal decision. The ICO can be contacted at: ICO, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF www.ico.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

*FOI Officer*

Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust