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Helme Chase

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Note: This consultation ended on 4 November 2016.

[View final decision information Here](#)

The consultation archive information is detailed below:

Public Consultation:

Changes at Helme Chase midwifery-led unit, Westmorland General Hospital, Kendal

Public consultation is taking place from **21 September to 4 November 2016** about an interim change that has been made to the Helme Chase midwifery-led unit.

We are now proposing that this change is made permanent.

This interim change, made almost two years ago, means that while women can still deliver their babies at Helme Chase 24/7, the staff are no longer on duty in the unit overnight and at weekends when there are no women or babies to care for. Instead they operate an on call service and if a woman goes into labour during these hours they arrange to meet her at the unit, or to assess her in her own home if that is her preference.

This means that women can still use the unit 24/7 for labour and delivery.

However, following the birth, community midwives now provide postnatal care in a woman's own home rather than in the unit. Over recent years there has been a national shift towards women who have had uncomplicated births requiring no medical input or ongoing medical care going home within hours of the baby's birth, with postnatal care being provided at home and in the community. This is because home is usually seen as the best place to recover following delivery.

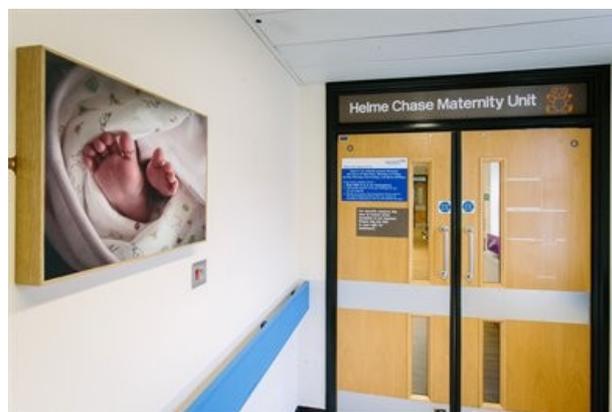
Helme Chase still provides a range of maternity services including antenatal clinics, scanning, postnatal care and parent education. Community midwifery and home birth services for Kendal and the South Lakes continue to be co-ordinated from Helme Chase.

The interim arrangement was made at a time when the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust's maternity service was under great pressure and subject to intense local and national interest. The Morecambe Bay Investigation was underway; there were significant recruitment difficulties and high levels of sickness. At the same time there had been a reduction in the number of deliveries at Helme Chase and it was felt that some of the staffing capacity could be used more flexibly to support the Trust-wide service and ease staffing shortages within the consultant-led maternity units at Royal Lancaster Infirmary and Furness General Hospital.

Since the interim change was made, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, which manages Helme Chase and hospitals in Lancaster and Barrow, has been able to make sure that women have greater continuity of care during their pregnancy. This means that they don't see several different midwives and they have been able to provide more flexible antenatal appointments during evenings and weekends. The midwives from Helme Chase are also able to work in the Trust's busy consultant-led units at Lancaster and Barrow which means they get more experience of caring for women in labour and delivery.

The Trust has been able to do this because the interim change has released some midwifery time which it has been able to use differently. In the first 15 months following the change, more than 3,000 working hours were freed up.

All of this has been taking place against a background of improvements across all of the



maternity services provided by the Trust as a result of the Morecambe Bay Investigation and also following [a national review of maternity services](#) by NHS England which set out a vision for safer and more personalised maternity care for women.

To help bring about these improvements, we have done a lot of engagement with local women about what is important to them when they become pregnant.

NHS Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Trust have reviewed how the arrangements have worked and the CCG is now proposing that the interim change is made on a permanent basis.



Documents relating to the consultation

- [View Report for Cumbria County Council Health Scrutiny Variation Subcommittee \(June 2016\)](#)
- [View Report that sets out the proposed plan for consultation](#)
- [View the consultation press release](#)

We will prepare a report which will include any feedback received and any actions that might be needed to address any concerns raised.

This report, which will be made public, will be considered by NHS Cumbria CCG's Governing Body and shared with the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust.

We will also present the report to a meeting of the Cumbria County Council Health Scrutiny committee which has responsibilities in relation to service changes within the NHS. We have had previous discussions with the committee about this proposed change. See here for copies of the reports previously presented to the committee.

- [Select Here to view the decision information](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

[+ What is Helme Chase?](#)

[+ What does the interim change mean for women who wish to birth at Helme Chase?](#)

[+ Why was the interim change made at Helme Chase?](#)

[+ How many babies are born at Helme Chase every year?](#)

[+ Who decides if a woman is low risk?](#)

[+ What is the Trust doing to promote Helme Chase?](#)

[+ Will people be supported across the geographical area irrespective of where they live?](#)



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