

Macclesfield Neonatal Unit re-designation

This report briefs the Health and Adult Social Care and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding a planned re-designation of the current Neonatal Unit at Macclesfield District General Hospital to a Special Care Baby Unit. This is essentially a change of the unit's title in response to current national standards, with the only significant outcome being that approximately three additional premature babies will be transferred to larger neighbouring units each year. This would be as a result of the unit changing its acceptance criteria by one week's gestation so that only babies of 32 weeks and above gestation would be admitted.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Neonatal Unit at Macclesfield Hospital is currently designated a 'Level 2' local neonatal unit.

A neonatal unit cares for infants who require an additional level of care to that of a normal well newborn. There are 3 levels of neonatal care:

- Level 1 – also known as a Special Care Baby Unit – admits babies delivered after 31 weeks gestation (or 32 for twins) who are considered low risk. Babies needing high dependency or ventilation are transferred out to a Level 2 or 3 unit
- Level 2 – also known as a Local Neonatal Unit – admit babies delivered after 28 weeks and above considered to be at medium risk. Also capable of delivering high dependency care and short term intensive care.
- Level 3 – also known as Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) – reserved for babies needing intensive care.

There is an 8 cot Level 2 (Local Neonatal Unit) located in close proximity to the Maternity wards on the Macclesfield Hospital site which cares for around 140 babies per year.

2 SERVICE CURRENTLY PROVIDED AS NNU

The Macclesfield Unit accepts infants born after 31 weeks' gestation – babies born earlier are transferred to larger specialist units.

- The Level 2 unit in Macclesfield currently accepts infants born after 31 weeks' gestation (contrary to the general standard of 28 weeks for a Level 2 unit outlined above), and twins of 32 weeks or more gestation.
- Other multiple pregnancies and high risk women are referred to other units.
- Any infants requiring specialist surgery are transferred to The Royal Manchester Children's Hospital or Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool.
- Babies requiring prolonged ventilation (>6 hours) are also transferred to these larger neighboring units. During 2016/17, 16 babies were transferred to other NNUs.

3 REASON FOR RE-DESIGNATION TO SCBU

The unit does not meet current requirements for a local neonatal unit with its existing medical staffing provision.

- A recent peer review found that the current service delivers good clinical care and positive outcomes
- However, the current medical staffing levels on Macclesfield's unit are not compliant with the recommended levels for a 'Level 2' local neonatal unit (as determined by the British Association of Perinatal Medicine), although they are sufficient for a Level 1 special care baby unit.
- This means there is one doctor providing overnight and weekend cover for both the neonatal unit and on the paediatric ward. The unit is compliant on weekdays.
- The small size of the unit means that it is not practicable or affordable to meet the staffing requirements of a Level 2 unit which requires 2 doctors overnight.
- Therefore re-designating the unit as a special care baby unit would ensure it is compliant with national standards, whilst meeting the needs of the service.
- NHS England (commissioners) and Cheshire and Mersey Neonatal Network are supportive of the re-designation.

4 SERVICE AFTER RE-DESIGNATION AS SCBU

Re-designation of the unit to a Special Care Baby Unit will have minimal impact on activity levels and result in around three additional transfers per year.

- The only significant change arising from the re-designation from a neonatal unit to a special care baby unit is that babies born at 32 weeks gestation or less will need to be transferred to a neighbouring hospital, rather than at the current 31 weeks.
- Based on activity levels, this means an additional three babies per year (approximately) will be transferred to a larger unit. For context, around 1,500 babies are born at Macclesfield Hospital each year.
- Neighbouring trusts have confirmed their ability to absorb this small number of transfers of care.
- Subject to approval, the trust plans to implement the re-designation in October 2019.

5 SUMMARY

- The Neonatal Unit at Macclesfield Hospital is currently designated a 'Level 2' local neonatal unit but does not meet clinical standards for this type of unit.
- Re-designating the unit as a special care baby unit would more accurately reflect the service it provides
- This will result in the transfer of around three additional premature babies each year due to changing acceptance criteria from babies with 31 to 32 weeks' gestation or more.

5.1 Committee members are asked to note the content of this report and raise any queries or requests for additional information.

Sign Off **Kath Senior**
Director of Nursing and Quality

Chairman: Lynn McGill

Chief Executive: John Wilbraham

APPENDIX A

Activity levels for Macclesfield

- 1. In 2016/17, 139 babies were admitted to the neonatal unit which represents 8% of all live births in the Trust (Peer Review, 2018).**
- 2. Overall bed occupancy was 32.8% for 2017/18 (34% for SCBU cots and 64% for HDU cots).**
- 3. The activity is significantly below the optimal levels suggested for a Level 2 Unit (BAPM).**