

IOW Neonatal Unit redesignation briefing

All levels of neonatal care are commissioned by NHS England Specialised Services. Care is provided in three types of neonatal unit:-

- Neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)
- Local neonatal unit (LNU)
- Special care unit (SCU)

The unit at St Mary's hospital is currently a LNU and it is planned to redesignate the unit to become a Special Care Unit. Currently babies with complex needs or of less than 27 weeks gestation (and 28 weeks for multiple births), are routinely cared for in Southampton or Portsmouth.

In general a LNU will look after babies born after 27 weeks and SCUs will take babies over 32 weeks. In this case, due to the special circumstances of the island location and to provide additional assurance, it is proposed that the minimum gestational age for neonatal admissions born at St Mary's hospital will be 34 weeks.

Background - case for change

There is a national review of the role and organization of LNUs underway. This has prompted commissioners and the Wessex Neonatal Operational Delivery Network to look at our local LNUs as we have a higher number of these than in most other areas of the country. It has become apparent that some of these LNUs care for a smaller number of patients than would be expected and are more in line with the volumes associated with SCUs (see graphs below) with the St Mary's service having the lowest number of LNU admissions in England. This issue plus concerns about the sustainability of the unit led to the redesignation of Dorchester last year from a LNU to a SCU.

The IOW neonatal unit staffing issues have led to the closure of the unit to new patients on multiple occasions in the last year. There have also been concerns regarding out of hours cover, training and skill maintenance issues. These issues together with quality concerns raised by a recent peer review have led the commissioners to undertake this redesignation project. This approach has been agreed by the Trust and will help support the Trust in maintaining a quality service for those babies remaining on the island.

The scope of this project does not include the longer term work proposed regarding the need for a new sustainable model on the island for all obstetrics, maternity and neonatal services.

Options – to be confirmed once workgroup underway but currently

- 1 Do nothing - unacceptable due to safety, quality and sustainability risks
- 2 Transfer mothers and infants in utero from 27-34 weeks gestation to closest LNU / NICU as appropriate

Impact

Mothers identified with complex deliveries or problems are already booked to deliver on the mainland and for babies born under 27 weeks or with complex needs there is an established pathway for care off the island.

The proposal is that this group of mothers and babies will be expanded to include those likely to deliver between 27 and 34 weeks. This change in criteria, based on the numbers from previous years, will probably affect about 20 mothers and 10 babies a year. The difference in numbers between mothers and babies is that a general rule of thumb is that twice the number of women likely to deliver will be transferred than actual do deliver. This number has been reducing over the last few years due to new options in delaying premature delivery.

Mothers and babies would be repatriated to the island as soon as clinically safe and appropriate, as we would want both as close to home as possible.

Approach

A working group has been proposed to look at the how current processes and pathways can be adapted to include this new cohort of patients. A date for the first meeting is currently being organised. This will include representation from a large number of stakeholders and will aim to ensure a safe and sustainable pathway for women and babies with the minimum of disruption possible.

NHS England specialised services have gone through the stage 1 assurance process, completed a 13Q assessment and are now seeking to engage with relevant organisations and groups going forward.

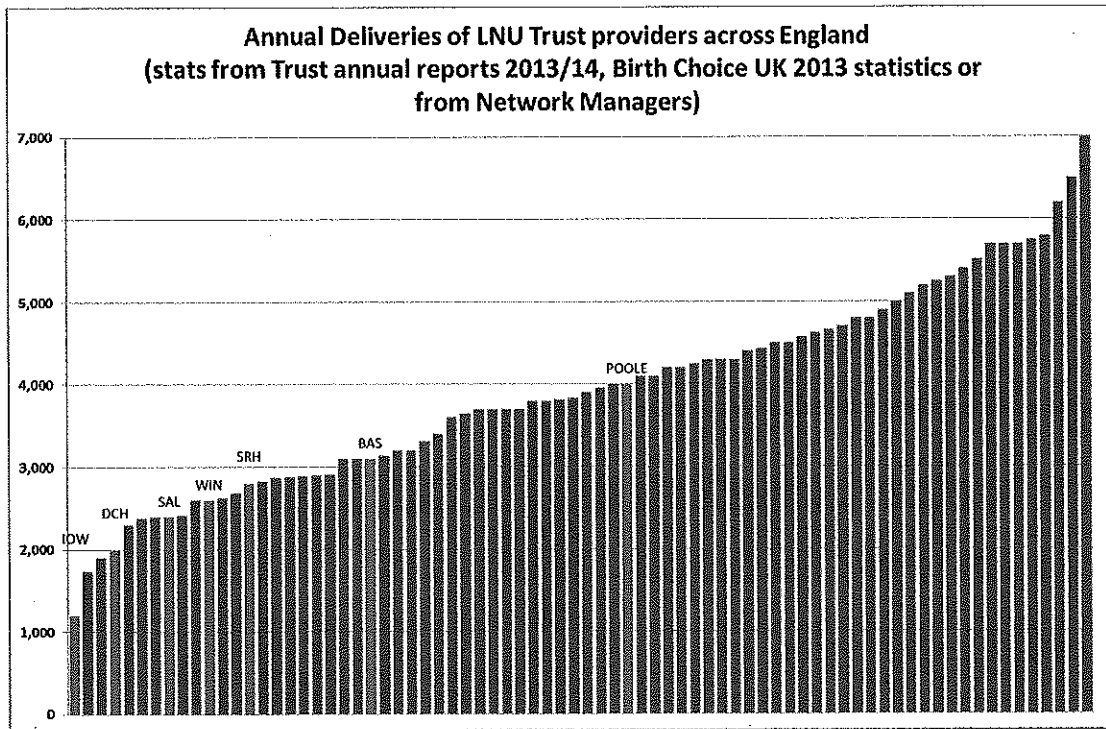
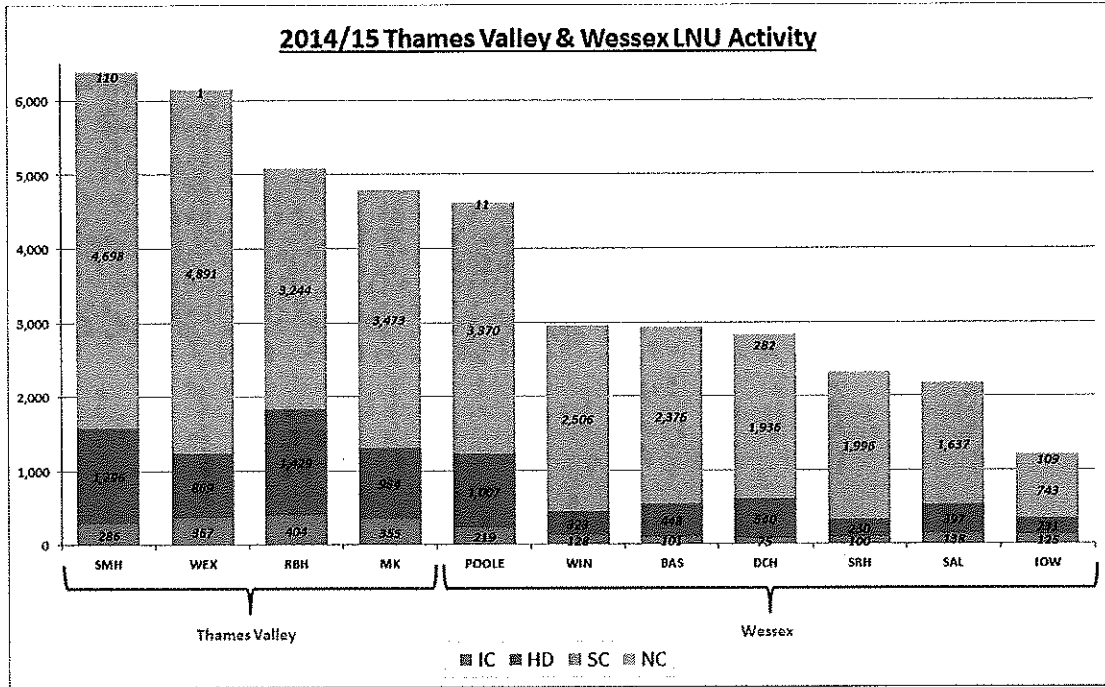


Figure 6 Demonstrates the Wessex LNUs average annual birth rates in comparison to the national average birth rates of LNUs & the national average birth rates of SCUs

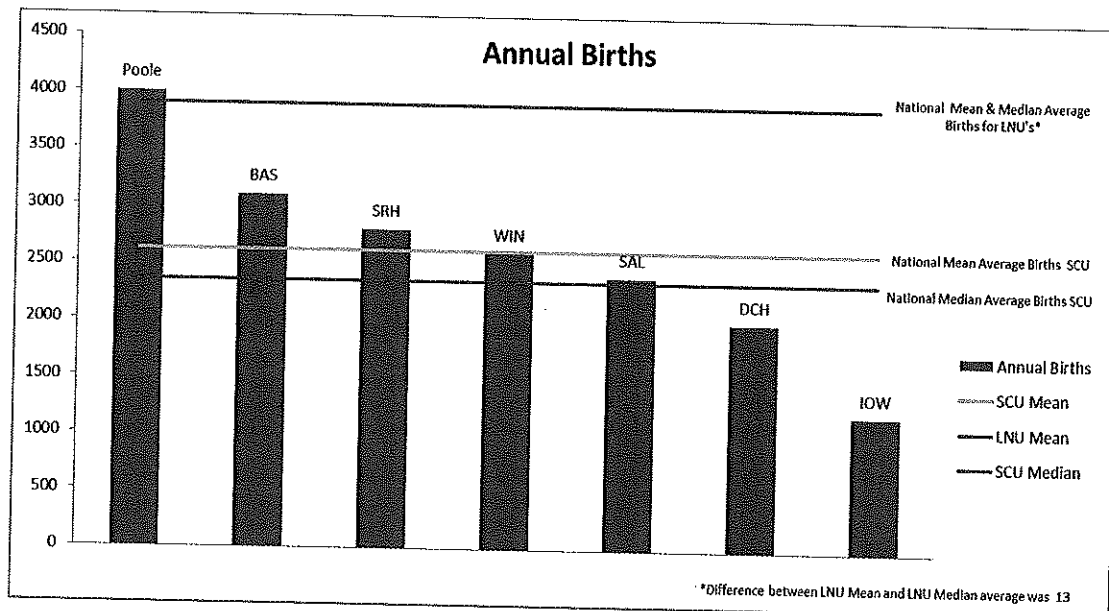


Figure 6 shows data Number of First Episode Admissions < 32 weeks gestation April 2012 – March 2015

Unit	Year Admitted	<27	27 - 29+6	30 - 31+6
Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	2012/13	0	4	12
	2013/14	1	5	13
	2014/15	3	8	9
Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Average		1	6	11
St Marys Isle of Wight	2012/13	3	3	6
	2013/14	3	4	3
	2014/15	0	5	4
St Marys Isle of Wight Average		2	4	4
Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust	2012/13	2	5	10
	2013/14	1	5	20
	2014/15	3	7	10
Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust Average		2	6	13
St Richard's Hospital (Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust)	2012/13	1	11	16
	2013/14	0	2	8
	2014/15	1	4	8
St Richard's Hospital (Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) Average		1	6	11