

Join the fight to ensure survival the Horton's maternity and children's services, says campaign group.



Keith Strangwood at The Horton General Hospital in Banbury. NNL-160706-143824009



by **Roseanne Edwards**
 roseanne.edwards@banburyguardian.co.uk

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A rallying call has gone out to the growing Banburyshire population to prepare for another major fight for the Horton General Hospital.

Keep the Horton General Campaign (KTHG) called on residents to join them in fighting proposals they believe will be made to downgrade the maternity and children's services.

They say the fight could rival that of 2007-8 when the town overcame a bid to completely downgrade acute services at the Banbury hospital.

The services were saved after the Independent Reconfiguration Panel and then-Health Secretary Alan Johnson said Oxford was too far away to transfer sick children and mothers in labour safely.

KTHG's concerns follow a meeting last Friday between midwives and managers from Oxford University Hospitals Trust (OUH) outlining possible future models of care for maternity.

Midwives reportedly came out saying the only option deemed possible by the trust was a midwife-led unit.

"We are told the Oxford-based head of midwifery and women's services say they will support whatever model the trust board chooses," said KTHG chair, Keith Strangwood.

"It seems the only two workable options are for things to stay as they are - which is not what they want or they would not be reorganising - or for the centre to be run by midwives.

"That would mean all first births or any kind of complication whatsoever would have to go to Oxford and we proved in 2007 the risks to life in that scenario are unacceptable.

"What we have now is a consultant-led unit (CLU) so Caesarian operations can be conducted without a moment's delay in the theatres alongside the delivery suites. With a population that is due to grow by another 120,000 by 2031, on top of the current 180,000 catchment, we need this service.

"The only option the trust appears to be supporting is an MLU. They don't offer a fair or viable proposal to keep the CLU option. We want to provide the facts the trust is clearly not willing to."

Mr Strangwood added: "We are not waiting to muster the troops to battle for our acute services. Our website, KeeptheHortonGeneral.org is excellent and is continually updated."

He said loss of consultant maternity would mean loss of the Special Care Baby Unit and the 24-hour children's ward.

Banbury MP Victoria Prentis said it may be time to "dust off Hands Off Our Horton banners and start again".

She said: "While no decisions have been made yet, I want to make it clear from the outset that I feel very strongly that we must keep high-level maternity care at the Horton. I am also sure that our paediatric care must continue to be local and first class.

"We have benefited enormously from having a world-class teaching hospital in Oxford.

"However, some of us live a very long way from it, and the traffic and parking situation near the John Radcliffe makes travel there a real problem. Of course, more specialist care for high risk pregnancies, and children with unusual conditions, may be better dealt with in the centres of excellence around the country. However, I believe that we need good quality maternity and paediatric care close to home in our own town in Banbury.

"The proposals put forward by the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust will consist of three options. I am interested to learn more about them. I want to see which offers the best and safest support to those who use the Horton."

Melanie Proudfoot of the OUH said a review of Horton services is part of an NHS bid to reassess services including maternity, paediatrics and urgent care alongside the Oxfordshire 'transformation' plans.

"We are in the early stages of discussions with staff and stakeholders.

"No decisions have been made and over the summer clinicians and managers will meet with the public as part of the engagement process," she said in a statement.

"The review involves looking at providing more services at the Horton General Hospital. There may be the potential to (increase) day surgery and outpatient appointments.

"This will [reduce](#) the number of patients travelling to our hospitals in Headington. Work is also underway to shape proposals for a rebuild of the aging buildings to ensure we have the infrastructure which is fit for purpose.

"All NHS organisations, including local GPs, are working together to review services in order to improve quality and reduce inequality in the following key areas: planned care; urgent care; maternity and children's services.

"Local people will be invited to a series of meetings and drop-in events in Banbury and other towns to find out more about the challenges and choices for developing services.

"Public feedback will be used to inform and shape plans. Any significant changes will be subject to a formal public consultation.

"This period of engagement will inform ideas for the way services might be best provided in the future. This is part of the joint work by the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS healthcare trusts and local GPs, working with our patients and the public to develop a five-year plan for sustainability and transformation (STP) of health and care services. The STP will act as a single strategic plan for all partners in the local health and care system and will help to deliver NHS England's Five Year Forward View."

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