



PRESS RELEASE

Campaigners consider legal challenge over maternity closures at Banbury hospital

At a board meeting yesterday afternoon (31 August 2016), Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUHFT) decided to suspend Consultant led Maternity Services at Horton General Hospital in Banbury.

Keep the Horton General campaign group (KTHG) instructed lawyers at Leigh Day earlier in the week. Lawyers sent a letter to the Trust on behalf of KTHG prior to the decision, setting out that a reduction of services would breach the Trust's obligation to involve patients in its decision making on service provision. The Trust did not consult members of the public in relation to the decision.

The reduction leaves only one midwife and one assistant to care for expectant mothers and babies for a population of nearly 47,000. Campaigners claim that OUHFT has made inadequate attempts to recruit replacement staff.

KTHG now awaits the Trust's reply to the letter, before discussing with its lawyers about what steps to take next. This follows a summer-long campaign, in which campaigners, politicians and staff fought a tough battle to keep the Maternity Unit intact.

Meanwhile, residents from Banbury have made their feelings known at a series of events, including two demonstrations at the Maternity Unit; Banbury's biggest ever public protest 'Hands Around the Horton', at which 5,000 people joined hands in a symbolic circle of protection around the hospital; two awareness-raising market stalls; support and publicity at Fairport Convention and ultimately, taking to the stage to publicly question and challenge the Trust at St Mary's.

"We could not have done any more," said Keith Strangwood, Chairman of KTHG. "We have done our utmost to get the message out to the public of Banburyshire that the OUHFT are hell bent on destroying our hospital. As long as we have a representative standing, we will fight on."

Ends

1 September 2016

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