

University Hospital Leicester hold their inaugural Maternity Safety Conference

28 February 2023  Sian Thompson

On Monday 13 February members of our specialist obstetric division were asked to attend and speak at a Maternity Safety Conference, organised and hosted by University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust. At a time when maternity services across the country are under scrutiny, the Trust created an event with talks addressing the most relevant issues within maternity services today as well as celebrating all the good work that they and their maternity team are doing to look to make their maternity service as safe as they can.

Attendees included midwives, obstetricians, neonatologists and anaesthetists as well as speakers from Trust management, HSIB and the Regional Chief Midwife Janet Driver and the Deputy Chief Midwife, Jess Read. The talks were varied in their topics; looking at work within the Trust, work within the wider maternity sector and considering ways in which improvements can be made. There was a focus on the variance in outcomes for people from ethnic minority backgrounds due to the patient population being treated within Leicester's hospitals. A real desire was shown by staff in wanting to address the issues which create difficulties for people from ethnic minority backgrounds in their pregnancy and birth and we were impressed by the technological innovations being developed to address the communication difficulties that are often a root cause of some of the issues faced.

Our team of Kelly Buckley (Partner), Sian Thompson (Senior Associate) and Kate Mellor (Associate) attended to provide a talk on Duty of Candour; a topic which is very relevant in the current climate within maternity services and host a stand on how we can help NHS maternity services.

The event was organised by Sarah Blackwell, Fetal Monitoring Lead at the Trust along with her colleagues Lisa Carr and Debbie Wilson. About the day Sarah said "it was a great chance for the MDT team to come together and understand the "why" behind changes and celebrate the work ongoing at UHL. The feedback from staff was supportive and they enjoyed the day".

Working with the Trust, we were honoured to attend and present alongside so many members of the Trust's own team and to help contribute to a day focussing on safety and looking to celebrate the Trust's desire to provide the safest service they can for the women they serve in their local community. We hope that this event is something which will continue within Leicester and it would be wonderful to see it replicated across other Trusts both in the region and nationally.

There is no getting away from the fact that nationally there are real issues within our maternity services. Donna Ockenden is currently undertaking her second investigation and there have been others on a smaller scale in other maternity departments across the country. It is important that all Trusts offering maternity services undertake a process of self scrutiny to seek to identify areas where they may need to improve their offering and seek to address these areas as soon as possible. Here at Browne Jacobson we have a range of tools we can use to support Trusts in this journey such as undertaking thematic reviews, delivering training or attending events like the one at Leicester. We are always open to approaches from Trusts requesting assistance so please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like us to help.

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