



Publication of Care Quality Commission Maternity Services Inspection Report for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust Frequently Asked Questions



**County Durham
and Darlington**
NHS Foundation Trust

In March 2023, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust maternity departments were visited by the CQC (Care Quality Commission), who carried out an unannounced focused inspection at both University Hospital of North Durham and Darlington Memorial Hospital, as part of the national maternity inspection programme.

The inspection was to look at how safe and well-led maternity services were.

Following the inspection, the CQC has published a report which is available on the CQC website. We were disappointed to receive a rating of inadequate for our maternity services both at University Hospital of North Durham and at Darlington Memorial Hospital.

The Trust has accepted the report and its findings and says significant improvements have already been made since the inspection in March.

We want to provide you with the best possible care at this really important moment in your life and are dedicated to looking after you and your family.

We appreciate the findings within the CQC report may raise concerns. We hope the below frequently asked questions are helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.

Who can I speak to if I have concerns about the CQC report?

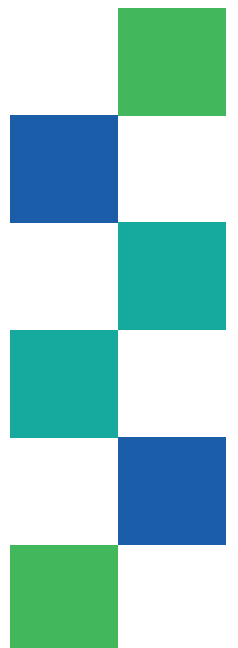
We would encourage you to speak to your community midwife in the first instance, this may be in your next antenatal appointment.

If you'd like to speak to other parents, you can do so via the County Durham or Darlington Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP) where key messages and information is shared. You can contact the County Durham and Darlington MNVP via email cddmvp@gmail.com.

Our Patient Experience Team is here for you to discuss any concerns or feedback you might have with your current care. You can contact them via telephone on 0800 7835774 or email cdda-tr.patientexperiencecddft@nhs.net.

I am due to give birth at University Hospital of North Durham or Darlington Memorial Hospital soon, is it safe?

Yes. We would like to provide reassurance to all of our parents-to-be that we are dedicated to providing a safe space and service for you to have your baby at both University Hospital of North Durham and Darlington Memorial Hospital.





We were inspected by the CQC in March 2023 and have already made improvements across our services to ensure that the concerns raised in the report are addressed and resolved. We are also committed to continuing this journey of improvement to further enhance the quality and safety of our services.

Are there enough staff to look after me?

Maternity services across England are all experiencing challenges due to a national shortage of midwives. We constantly monitor our staffing on the maternity units and our community teams, with at least daily cross-site calls to enable our midwives to be in the best possible place to care for patients in our service.

We plan how we staff our maternity units each day, and take action as necessary, to maintain 1 to 1 care for every parent-to-be who needs it.

We have been successfully recruiting to our maternity teams, with over 30 new midwives who have either already joined us or will do so shortly, including 10 new international midwives and a cohort of newly qualified midwives in the autumn. We have a continuous midwifery recruitment programme, and also support progression within our existing teams.

Will I be able to have the birth I want?

We would encourage you to discuss your wishes with your community midwife. They will be able to best placed to advise and support you. We do have some challenges at the present time.

Unfortunately, our birthing pool at Darlington Memorial Hospital is currently unavailable. We are able to offer water births at our maternity unit at University Hospital of North Durham.

Our home birth service is currently suspended at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, this was to allow for staffing the overall service safely in our hospitals.

This is not a decision we have taken lightly. The safety of our parents-to-be is always our priority and we apologise for any distress this may cause.

We are continually reviewing the position and remain committed to reinstating our home birthing service as soon as we are assured that we can support our parents-to-be with a safe, high quality service.

We have lots of recruitment work underway with over 30 new midwives who have either already joined us or will do so shortly, including 10 new international midwives and a cohort of newly qualified midwives in the autumn.



We have a continuous midwifery recruitment programme, and also support progression within our existing teams.

If you are hoping to birth at home, we would please encourage you to speak to your midwife, and as a service we will look to meet your needs as much as possible in planning for your labour and birth, in our home from home environments.

Can I change hospitals?

We would encourage you to discuss any concerns with your community midwife in the first instance to see if we can support you with any queries or concerns.

How soon will I be seen if I arrive in an emergency?

We will ensure you are triaged as soon as you arrive on site in line with your clinical need and evidence-based standards and this will determine how quickly you need to be reviewed fully to ensure your safety.

We have midwives and doctors who are trained to support you and will keep you informed about your situation to enable informed decision making with you.

Is equipment regularly checked?

Yes. The senior clinical team ensure daily checks on our emergency equipment, which is prioritised and regularly carried out. We also have introduced more robust checks of equipment by staff on the units.

Is staff training regularly monitored?

Yes, all staff working in the maternity unit undergo regular mandatory training that is responsive to women's needs and patient feedback. We have dedicated clinical leads to ensure good staff performance and confidence, and we are also expanding our training to other staff groups.

We have strengthened staff testing and training on issues such as call bell failure and emergency evacuation of birthing pools, and regularly provide training on emergency 'skills and drills'.

We have systems in place to enable more robust recording of staff training compliance, which enables our managers to review any staff training needs.

How do you assess, monitor and improve the quality of services?

We listen to our patient feedback via complaints, compliments and incident forms as your opinions are really important to us.



Regularly monitoring our processes enables us to ensure high quality standards are in place and improvements are made where necessary. We have a dedicated audit midwife and an annual audit plan going forwards. We are also up to date with all outstanding audit reports and have regular meetings between our teams in maternity to present findings, share learnings, and ensure we are always improving.

Feedback from our patients, from Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership and from our regulators is important to us to drive development and improvement.

Are serious incidents investigated thoroughly?

Yes. We ask our staff to report wherever things go wrong, so that we can learn and make improvements.

We already involve patients and families in our learning process, discussing their key concerns and trying to address them through our investigations and the actions we take; however, we want to provide further and more meaningful involvement in the future.

We are ensuring that all incidents are looked into promptly and taking action based on what we find. The CQC found that we had not always embedded learning and actions as well as we would want to. We have already made changes to improve our learning processes and are working with partners from our local Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership to strengthen this further.

Is my feedback listened to and acted on?

Yes. We were pleased the CQC noted in their report that our staff promoted a culture that placed patient care at the heart of the service and recognised the power of caring relationships between people.

We want to provide you with the best possible care at this really important moment in your life. Your experience and feedback really does help improve our services and to identify where things are already working well.

There are a number of ways to give your feedback, including the Friends and Family Test FFT via [cddft.nhs.uk](https://www.cddft.nhs.uk) - via the County Durham or Darlington Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership email cddmvp@gmail.com, and through the CQC patient survey on [cqc.org.uk](https://www.cqc.org.uk) - Give feedback on care webpage.

You can also contact our Patient Experience Team via telephone **0800 7835774** or email cdda-tr.patientexperiencecddft@nhs.net