



⊕ Returning a maternity service to the Alexandra Hospital

Rachel Maclean

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Foreword

In 2015, maternity services at the Alexandra Hospital were ‘temporarily’ closed and transferred to Worcestershire Royal Hospital as a result of safety concerns.

Following a consultation process, which in my opinion ignored the overwhelming view of the people of Redditch who favoured not transferring services to Worcester, in July 2017, local health bosses approved the Future of Acute Hospitals in Worcestershire Review which confirmed maternity services would remain permanently centralised at Worcestershire Royal.

Shortly after I was first elected in June 2017, I said: **“I cannot support any proposal that removes services from Redditch, in favour of having them delivered at the Worcestershire Royal, against the wishes of Redditch people.”**

I am continuously fighting for a brighter future for the Alex, and in 2019 I was re-elected to fight to return a maternity and children’s service to Redditch’s hospital. Having secured 63% of the vote, I have an overwhelming mandate from the people of Redditch to fight for the return of services.

Although there were times during the pandemic where it is was not right for me to distract local health bosses from doing everything they could to save lives, my team and I continued to focus on how we can return a maternity service to the Alex.

With record funding for our NHS and the Government recruiting more midwives and increasing training places, this document sets out why I believe returning a maternity service is possible.

I’ve also researched how maternity services are provided in other parts of England to demonstrate that it is possible for maternity services to be provided at more than one hospital.

I’ve never promised it would be easy to return services to the Alex, but I’ve never given up on anything in my life and I’m not about to start now.

Thank you for reading this document.



Rachel Maclean MP

Member of Parliament for Redditch **3**



Foreword by Kirsty Southwell

I went for a routine midwife appointment at our local community centre which has a nursery attached to it.

My midwife tried to find Finley's heartbeat. She said I'm sorry but I can't seem to find baby's heartbeat go to the toilet and have a jiggle about and see if we can get him moving.

In that time I was sat on the toilet sobbing my eyes out and the children from the nursery came into the toilets. One little boy said are you ok? I said yes and walked back to the room where the midwife said you need an emergency scan at Worcester and you will need to make your own way there. My mum and I looked at each other and we just couldn't believe what was said.

Just two hours after finding out that my son has no heartbeat, my mum and I had to find someone to take us to Worcestershire Royal Hospital at what was a very emotional time for us. Then, when we finally arrived after a friend of mine dropped us off at the hospital, I was rushed into a room with a sonographer and she turned around to me and said I just need to get another opinion.

Another lady then came in and I could see their faces they both turned to me and said sorry there's no heartbeat. I could see my little boy on screen just lying there not moving. I didn't know what to do. I just cried with my mum.

I've set up a petition calling for the return of services to the Alex because it's vital we have all of our services back at our hospital. I don't want anyone to go through what my family and I went through and having to think of how to get to Worcester which is 45 minutes away. That journey felt like hours knowing I'm carrying a dead baby. It was absolutely heartbreaking.

Please bring back our maternity services to the Alexandra Hospital as it is vital for all expectant mothers and babies.

Kirsty Southwell

Redditch mum



My long-term plan for the future of the Alex

Ever since I was first elected in 2017 I have been fighting for our hospital.

It continues to be the number one issue for my constituents, and it remains my top priority.

I have long argued that the Alex has a bright future ahead of it. This is clearly demonstrated by the investment we're seeing in our hospital.

The Garden Suite is being returned to the Alex, a Breast Imaging Unit has opened, the state-of-the-art Rory the Robot is being installed and we're getting a multi-million operating theatre complex. The £33 million purpose-built extension to the Alex will contain seven new operating theatres which will operate alongside the hospital's current theatres.

We can both welcome investment in the Alex and at the same time continue to fight to return services to our hospital.

This report to return a maternity service to the Alex forms part of my long-term vision for the Alex.

It is just the first step of my plan, which will shortly be followed by a report to return children's services to our hospital.

It's clear for all to see that the Alex can be better utilised and relieve the pressures on Worcestershire Royal Hospital.

This long-term plan will refresh the 12-point plan I released in 2017. We're in a different place now compared to where we were 5 years ago, and so it's right we look to the future with a new and updated vision for our hospital.



How do Acute Trusts provide maternity services in other parts of England?

There are many examples of Acute Trusts in England which provide maternity services at more than one acute hospital.

The best comparator is Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (WAHT) and Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHFT) serve similar population sizes.

GHFT provides care for the population of Gloucestershire which currently stands at **637,070**. For comparison, the population of Worcestershire is **595,786**.

What maternity services does GHFT provide?

Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust currently provides maternity services at Cheltenham General Hospital, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital and at the Stroud maternity unit.

Aveta Birth Centre – Cheltenham General Hospital

The birth centre at Cheltenham General Hospital is run by midwives. En suite rooms include the tools to promote a natural delivery. If a woman needs an epidural or there is an unexpected problem with them or their baby, they will be transferred to the delivery suite at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

Birth unit at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

The midwife-led birth unit at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital's women's centre is designed to encourage active, natural labour in a home from home environment. If a woman needs an epidural or there is an unexpected problem with them or their baby, they will be transferred to the delivery suite.

Delivery suite at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

The delivery suite at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital is a state of the art facility, designed to give women medical assistance during labour.

Stroud maternity unit

The Stroud maternity unit is a small midwife led centre that helps deliver around 300 births every year. After giving birth, women can stay at Stroud maternity unit for extra care and support. It has en-suite rooms with facilities for birth partners to stay overnight.

If a woman needs an epidural or there is an unexpected problem with them or their baby, they will be transferred to the delivery suite at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

How do birth rates compare between Worcestershire and Gloucestershire?

In 2020, there were **5,800** live births in Gloucestershire. It meant the fertility rate was **1.59 births** per women in Gloucestershire.

In Worcestershire there were **5,388** live births. It meant the fertility rate was **1.62 births** per women in Worcestershire.

The total fertility rate is the average number of children a mother would have while she is of childbearing age, if she experienced the typical fertility rate every year.

If we look more closely and compare Redditch to Stroud, which has its own standalone midwife-led birthing unit, you will see that in Redditch Borough there were **937** live births in 2020. The fertility rate was **1.76** births per women in Redditch Borough. In Stroud District, there were **973** live births in 2020. The fertility rate was **1.56** births per women in Stroud District.

As you can see, even with a lower fertility rate than Redditch, Stroud is able to sustain its own midwife-led birthing unit.

Source:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/datasets/birthsummarytables>

Would replicating the Stroud maternity unit in Redditch be an option?

Let's take a closer look at the midwife-led birthing unit in Stroud and if this could be an option for us here in Redditch.

The maternity unit in Stroud operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is led by midwives. The unit helps deliver around 300 births every year.

Midwife-led birthing units are designed to encourage women with **uncomplicated pregnancies** to consider giving birth outside of hospital settings such as in midwifery units.

Women may need to be transferred to a hospital if there are any complications. In Stroud's case, women would be transferred to the delivery suite at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

It's important to stress that, of the **559,728** births in NHS hospitals in England in 2020/21, **52%** of deliveries were 'spontaneous' - this is when a pregnant woman goes into labour without the use of drugs or other techniques to induce labour and she delivers her baby through the vagina without forceps, vacuum extraction or a cesarean section.

Source: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-maternity-statistics/2020-21>

This shows that a majority of women would be able to give birth in a midwife-led delivery unit.

How many midwives staff the Stroud maternity unit?

As you can see from the table below, 24 whole time equivalent midwives are needed to operate the maternity unit in Stroud.

Source: Freedom of Information Request

Cost centre 32023 Stroud Birthing Unit	
2021/22	Funded
	WTE
Band 7	2.00
Band 6	23.30
Band 3	2.43
Band 2	6.83
Admin Band 2	0.11
Total	34.67
Total excl Community	13.83

How much does it cost to operate the Stroud maternity unit?

As you can see from the table below, it costs around **£1.09 million** a year to operate the Stroud midwife-led birthing unit.

With record amounts of Government investment in our NHS, I believe this is a service that should be provided by Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

Source: Freedom of Information Request

Stroud Maternity 2021/22	Funded	Budget	Full Year pro rata cost
Direct costs	WTE	£	£
Total Pay (mainly Midwifery staff)	13.83	599,527	610,147
Total Non Pay (e.g. drugs, medical equipment, print/stat, travel, etc)		24,784	70,164
Total Direct costs	13.83	624,311	680,310
Plus 5% indirect costs (such as pharmacy, pathology, radiology etc)			34,016
Plus 26% Trust overheads			176,881
Plus CNST cost			199,119
Total cost			1,090,326

Conclusion

After comparing birth rates between Redditch and Stroud, and setting out the costs involved and the staff needed to operate a midwife-led birthing unit, I strongly believe this should be an option that should be considered by Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

If Stroud is able to sustain a standalone birthing unit, then I am firmly of the belief that this should be replicated here in Redditch.

In the following chapters I will set out how I believe record amounts of funding for the NHS, as well as record numbers of midwifery students strengthens our argument to return a maternity service to the Alex.

Is Redditch a growing town?

The short answer is yes, Redditch's population is continuing to grow.

According to the 2021 Census, in Redditch, the population size has increased by **3.3%** from around **84,200** in 2011 to **87,000** in 2021.

Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000236/>

This means Redditch's population has increased faster than had been projected. **Source:** <https://bit.ly/3QVBVcm>

Conclusion

As part of our ambitious and positive vision for the future of Redditch by unlocking its full potential, we need a hospital where a majority of women can give birth, especially as Redditch continues to grow.

We want people to come and live and work in Redditch, and with a hospital where women can give birth, I'm certain this would encourage more people to consider living in our wonderful town.



What is the Government doing to recruit more doctors, nurses and midwives?

Central to making the case to return services to the Alex is the need for more healthcare professionals to be recruited.

We are making progress on this. We're now in a position where there are more doctors and nurses working for Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust than when I was first elected.

There are over **21,000** more doctors and almost **17,000** more nurses on hospital wards across the country. **Source:** <https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan/nhs>

Below I will set out what the Government is doing to recruit more doctors, nurses and midwives and how this strengthens our case for services to be returned to the Alex.

Midwives

An additional **£95 million** was announced in 2021 to support the recruitment of a further **1,200** midwives and **100** obstetricians.

The Government is increasing the number of midwives by expanding midwifery training places by **3,650** over a four-year period to 2022/23.

The Government has also made a non-repayable training grant of at least **£5,000** per academic year available for eligible midwifery students.

A record number of students have been accepted for places this year to study midwifery.

Source: PRU

Nurses

The Government's commitment is to recruit **50,000 more nurses** in addition to the 7,500 further nurse associates announced previously.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3AwoMRt>

As of June 2022, the number of NHS nurses had increased by over **27,000 FTE** from the year before.

Source: PRU

Nursing students receive a non-repayable maintenance grant of at least **£5,000**. **Source:** <https://bit.ly/3OONuQP>



What is being done in Worcestershire to train more doctors locally?

After my fellow Worcestershire MPs and I successfully lobbied the Government, the University of Worcester's Three Counties Medical School will be accepting its first 20 students this September.

Training our own doctors in Worcestershire will be game-changing as it will ensure the County retains more doctors to work in our hospitals, rather than losing them to places such as Bristol and Birmingham.

In July 2020, the University of Worcester received the largest allocation of additional places for health professional students in the UK, educating an extra 400 nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

How does recruiting more doctors, nurses and midwives support the campaign to return a maternity and children's service to the Alex?

Services were removed due to staff shortages and recruitment challenges which ultimately led to safety concerns and the centralisation of services to Worcestershire Royal.

A key factor in making the strongest possible case to return these services to the Alex will be recruitment and increasing the NHS workforce.

With record numbers of students studying midwifery, 27,000 more nurses working in the NHS compared to last year and with trainee doctors commencing their training at the University of Worcester's Three Counties Medical School in September, this provides a strong case for once again providing a maternity service at the Alex.

How record amounts of funding for our NHS strengthens the case for services to be returned to the Alex

This Conservative Government is investing record amounts of funding into our NHS.

The NHS budget will go up by **£33.9 billion** by 2023-24. That's the biggest cash boost in its history. **Source:** <https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan/nhs>

Despite difficult financial circumstances, **NHS investment has increased every year since 2010.**

I'm proud to have supported and voted for this historic investment in our National Health Service.

With historic investments in our NHS, which the Alex is benefitting from, I believe the funding is there to provide a maternity service at the Alex.



Why should the Trust listen to the people of Redditch and return a maternity service to the Alex?

Given the evidence set out in this document, I believe there is a strong case to return a maternity service to the Alex.

As you will have read, there are examples across England where Acute Trusts provide maternity services at more than one of their hospitals. The strongest example is Gloucestershire.

Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHFT) has shown us that it is possible to provide maternity services at more than one hospital, and this is especially pertinent given GHFT and Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust serve similar population sizes.

The Stroud midwife-led birthing unit provides the Acute Trust with a feasible option to provide a maternity service at the Alex. It would ensure a majority of women in Redditch would once again be able to give birth at our hospital.

Our argument to return services to the Alex is also strengthened by the Government's record and historic investments in our NHS which I have supported and voted for.

We're also seeing more doctors, nurses and midwives being recruited. We have a medical school in Worcester which will be training doctors, and the University of Worcester received the largest allocation of additional places for health professional students in the UK.

Again, this is central to our campaign to return services. The Acute Trust will need the staff to be able to safely operate these services. Patient safety must always come first.

I will be presenting this document to the Chief Executive and Board of Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

As I have a democratic mandate from the people of Redditch to fight to return a maternity service to the Alex, the Acute Trust must continue to engage with me and set out a detailed response to the evidence and data presented in this document.

This fight will not be easy, and we will continue to be frustrated, but I refuse to lose hope.

I've never given up on anything in my life and I'm not about to start now.



Rachel Maclean MP

Member of Parliament for Redditch