



Royal College of  
Obstetricians &  
Gynaecologists

## **REPORT**

# **Review of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services at North Devon Healthcare NHS Trust**

On 27–28 September 2017



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the second review by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) commissioned by the North Devon Healthcare NHS Trust (NDHT). The first review, which took place in 2013, highlighted difficult working relationships within the maternity department with the potential to affect patient care.

This review was requested following a series of clinical incidents, and the assessors were also tasked to evaluate the relationships between medical and midwifery staff. The review also aimed to assess the clinical governance processes that follows clinical incidents, in terms of escalation and the quality of the investigation, as well as staff adherence to (and quality of) the local clinical guidelines.

The assessors found that staff at all levels were willing to engage in the review process. Working and interpersonal relationships appeared to be a major issue within the unit and had broken down at multiple levels. This was particularly evident between medical and midwifery staff.

Medical staff (particularly at consultant level) appeared deskilled, demotivated and over reliant [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for all nonclinical leadership aspects of the running of the unit. The consultants seemed reluctant to follow guidelines, unwilling to cooperate with each other and unhappy to accept (even constructive) challenge from midwifery colleagues.

By converse, a majority of well-motivated and progressive midwives seemed driven to act as advocates for women, in the attempt to guarantee their safety.

Working patterns, job planning and clinical governance processes (unwittingly promoting a blame culture) also appeared to play a major destabilising role.

The assessors have made recommendations that they hope will be constructive and help to improve the care provided to women and their babies.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This review has been commissioned by Dr George Thomson, Medical Director of NDHT, to assess the obstetrics and gynaecology services based on information provided by the Trust and on interviews undertaken during the visit.

## 3. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]