

IMWH WORKSHOP 16TH FEBRUARY 2026

Thank you to everyone who attended our 2nd Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services Workshop on Monday 16th February 2026. This workshop followed on from our first event in September 2025 and formed an important part of our ongoing planning for the future development of our Obstetric and Midwifery services.

We were pleased to welcome Dr Tara Fairley, Deputy Medical Director and Katie Colville, Director of Midwifery from NHS Grampian. They shared valuable insights into how they manage multiple sites across urban and rural areas while continuing to sustain and evolve their services in the face of significant pressures.

The session also provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved and the outstanding challenges within our own services over the past six months and to look ahead to the next phase of development.

We heard about improvements recognised through the Support and Intervention Framework monitoring by SPPG, with the service now de-escalated to Level 1. We discussed how we have increased the proportion of women receiving continuity of midwifery care, strengthened some elements of recruitment and retention of both midwifery and medical staff, expanded opportunities for training and cross-site working, continued work and development in enhancing our governance processes, and improved staff engagement. Initiatives within Gynaecology, including progress achieved in respect of Gynae waiting lists was also highlighted, including the development of patient pathways and nurse led services.

Staff recruitment

Strengthening our workforce remains a key priority in supporting safe, sustainable, and high-quality Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Midwifery services across both hospital sites. Over the past year, we have made meaningful progress in both midwifery and medical recruitment, contributing to improved service resilience and supporting our continued programme of development.

Midwifery

Midwifery recruitment continues to show positive momentum, with a highly successful campaign attracting 104 applicants, reaffirming the Southern Trust as an employer of choice. Throughout 2025, a total of 20 WTE Band 5/6 midwives commenced in post, with a further 10 WTE joining the service between January and May 2026.

As a result, the midwifery workforce is now in a markedly stronger and more stable position than it was 12 months ago. This improvement provides a solid foundation as we continue to embed Continuity of Midwifery Care, expand service models, and implement the priorities identified through the Support and Intervention Framework. The Trust remains committed to sustaining this progress through proactive workforce planning and responsive support measures.

We are hugely appreciative of the efforts of all staff in supporting the Trust during very challenging periods re Midwifery workforce availability and look forward to continued developments and service stability.

Medical

Progress has also been made across medical staffing, with ongoing recruitment aimed at addressing service gaps in both Craigavon Area Hospital (CAH) and Daisy Hill Hospital (DHH). Posts continue to be advertised on a rolling basis to strengthen workforce resilience and support our cross-site service model.

At CAH, two consultants, one Gynaecology Consultant and one Obstetrics & Gynaecology Consultant, commenced in February 2026. An additional Obstetrics & Gynaecology Consultant is scheduled to take up post in April 2026, further enhancing clinical leadership and capacity.

At DHH, applications for a new Obstetrics & Gynaecology Consultant post recently closed; however, the sole shortlisted applicant withdrew. One SAS Doctor was successfully appointed in March 2026, and two strong candidates have been placed on a reserve list, providing an ongoing recruitment pipeline.

These combined recruitment efforts support the wider vision of a fully integrated, cross-site model and enable us to continue developing services in line with the priorities identified during the workshop.

The Trust will continue to explore all opportunities to attract and recruit additional medical capacity into the service. This includes engagement with the commissioner and Department of Health.

Service developments moving forward

The second part of the workshop focused on identifying priority areas for continued development, as well as new areas requiring action. Multidisciplinary groups, comprising of medical, midwifery and nursing colleagues from both acute sites and community services worked together to propose the key areas for action in the coming months. The priorities identified were:

- A commitment to operating as one Service with aligned pathways, guidance and governance.
- Establishment of consistently staffed centralised triage for assessment of pregnant women, maximising the opportunities for midwifery-led care.
- Development of a consistent referral pathway into consultant-led care and back to midwifery-led care as appropriate.
- Centralised triage for assessment of Early Problem Pregnancy Clinic and expansion of access to this clinic.
- Rapid implementation of pre-induction pathways, focused on optimising the utilisation of existing hospital and community services.
- Review of the Gestational Diabetes pathway.
- Continued development of Continuity of Midwifery Care.
- Review of the midwifery and nursing management structure for Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services (a cross-Trust model has already been agreed for medical management).

- Implementation of cross-site midwifery huddles focused on managing risk and demand across the Trust.
- Cross-site training events.
- Avail of opportunities to strengthen the medical consultant work force in O&G via engagement with the commissioner and based on service demand.
- Lead staff from Midwifery and Medicine will visit Grampian to learn from their experience and service design where relevant.

These priorities have been incorporated into our overarching O&G action plan and will be taken forward through our existing working groups.

Our ongoing success in strengthening and developing our services will depend on effective cross-site collaboration and the continued engagement of all our staff. This collective effort is essential to ensuring we adapt to service demands and deliver on our vision for Integrated Maternity and Women's Health Services.

We will continue to share progress and involve staff through working groups, cross-site huddles, and joint training opportunities. A further workshop is planned for September 2026. Thanking everyone who participated in the workshop and your respective teams for your continued commitment to these hugely important areas of the Trust's business.

“The Southern Trust is committed to facilitating access to high quality antenatal, intrapartum, and postnatal care to women, as close to home as safely possible.”

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