



**Doncaster and Bassetlaw  
Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Foundation Trust

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# Briefing

July 2017

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## **Paediatric Admissions at Bassetlaw Hospital (A3)**

### **Background**

Due to identified staffing shortages in December 2016 we had to close our Paediatric Ward, A3, in January 2017 at night to ensure that the staffing resource which was available was used to provide services at BDGH that were safe and sustainable.

This change was not about cutting back at Bassetlaw but was due to national shortages of paediatric staff which has the greatest effect on smaller services. As our highest priority at the Trust is to provide the safest care and treatment for our patients we assessed that the risks to children would be significantly reduced by providing an enhanced assessment service in the day and inpatient paediatric care at Doncaster Royal Infirmary or Sheffield Children's Hospital.

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### **The current service**

Children attending Bassetlaw Emergency Department after 7pm are assessed and:

- children requiring admission are transferred (via a specially commissioned children's private ambulance service) to the Children's Ward at Doncaster Royal Infirmary for their immediate care and treatment
- discharged home, and/ or referred to a dedicated Review Clinic on the Children's Assessment Unit (CAU) the next morning.

As part of the changes we have taken steps to enhance our day services. A paediatric consultant is now on site until 6pm and junior paediatric medical staff are on site 24 hrs per day to support ED and the Maternity Service. This means that any children coming to the Emergency Department continue to be seen and offered necessary treatment.

Paediatric services remain at Bassetlaw Hospital and in the current model special clinics with senior paediatricians are hosted each morning to support children's care and avoid unnecessary admission. Elective children's day surgery also continues as well as children's outpatients in the newly built facility following a £ 250,000 investment in 2015/ 2016.

Ahead of the changes we identified a small number of children who had visited the ward on a frequent basis and had often stayed overnight. Working with these children, and their families, we have made sure there is a personal care plan in place for any future stays.

### **Numbers of children and families affected by the changes**

All children needing overnight care have been transferred safely to Doncaster Royal Infirmary where they bypass the Emergency Department at DRI and are admitted to the Children's Unit. Those awaiting transfer are cared for at Bassetlaw Hospital by our skilled clinicians, and paediatricians who are on-site 24/7.

Our team work very hard to make sure this experience is as comfortable and seamless as possible, and if parents encounter any issues, we ask that they speak to a member of staff or contact the Trust directly.

Since the changes the numbers of transfers are as follows:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Numbers transferred from CAU</b>	<b>Numbers transferred from Emergency Department</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Transfers as a % the of children attending Bassetlaw Hospital</b>
<i>30 Jan to 5 Feb</i>	7	12	19	6.9%
<i>6 Feb to 12 Feb</i>	11	3	14	5.4%
<i>13 Feb to 19 Feb</i>	2	7	9	4.1%
<i>20 Feb to 26 Feb</i>	11	6	17	7.5%
<i>27 Feb to 5 Mar</i>	13	6	19	8.01%
<i>6 Mar to 12 Mar</i>	12	1	13	5.40%
<i>13 Mar to 19 Mar</i>	6	4	10	
<i>20 Mar to 26 Mar</i>	7	4	11	
<i>27 Mar to 2 Apr</i>	6	3	9	
<i>3 Apr to 9 Apr</i>	10 (*+1)	4	15	7.21%
<i>10 Apr to 16 Apr</i>	7	4	11	
<i>17 Apr to 23 Apr</i>	6	4	10	
<i>24 Apr to 30 Apr</i>	12	3	15	
<i>1 May to 7 May</i>	6	7	13	7.47%
<i>8 May to 14 May</i>	12	4	16	
<i>15 May to 21 May</i>	3 (*+1)	10	14	
<i>22 May to 28 May</i>	8	4	12	
<i>29 May to 4 Jun</i>	7	3	10	

These numbers include patients who require prolonged observation or inpatient admission who are transferred to the Children's Ward at Doncaster Royal Infirmary (DRI) as early as

possible, and include patients who would have transferred under the previous arrangements.

Note: \*transferred as ordinary practice.

### **Providing information to the community and families**

In response to a public campaign on social media we have published on our website and promoted through social media Frequently Asked Questions (see appendix) about the changes to the services.

We also placed columns in the Worksop Guardian and Retford Times from both the Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Nursing clarifying the changes to the services and what families need to know about caring for their children and what to do in an emergency (still attend Bassetlaw Hospital).

### **Recruitment update**

As part of a recruitment drive in March we advertised for trained and newly qualified Children's Nurses (qualifying in September 2017). From our initial advertisement we received five applications to our Paediatric nursing positions, four of whom were student nurses qualifying in September and one that was not paediatric trained.

In addition to this we ran a number of open days and attended recruitment events and as a result in April we offered interviews to 16 people for paediatric nursing and special care baby unit posts, most of whom are soon-to-qualify. 15 accepted and were allocated an interview slot, 6 of these withdrew on the day of the interview and 1 did not attend. Of the 8 interviewed we offered 6 staff posts. Five were student nurses who would not be available to commence work until October.

Despite our aim to ensure that we are an attractive prospect for potential team members, making Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals their number one choice when choosing a future employer the competition is such that we have since received back word from a number of the newly qualified nurses who were offered positions with us, with only 2 still accepting positions on CAU.

We currently have an advert out for Children's Nursing vacancies on both sites, and this is being publicised through national nursing journals. We remain committed to try to recruit to a full establishment at Bassetlaw however this is looking increasingly unrealistic. News this week highlights that for the first time ever the number of nurses and midwives leaving the profession is higher than those joining, and like many other local and regional hospitals we are looking to recruit from a highly specialist pool of nurses, with paediatric nursing having the second highest vacancy rate across the country.

Richard Parker  
Chief Executive

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why have we changed?**

We have made these changes on the Paediatric Ward, known as A3, due to staffing issues, a problem that is affecting the entire NHS. It would be unsafe to admit children overnight if we do not have sufficient doctors and nurses to look after them and we have taken this decision in line with expert advice and guidance.

### **My child attends A3 regularly, what will happen to them?**

For children who have used A3 regularly individual letters have been sent to the parents, describing the service available to them to continue to use A3 and for alternatives for when the unit is closed.

### **Is this about funding?**

No, the Ward is funded for 12 (whole time equivalent) band 5 Registered Children's Nurses. Currently we only have six, and have been unsuccessful in recruiting to these vacant posts. Admitting children without a full complement of staff would be unsafe.

### **Are you actively recruiting to nursing vacancies at Bassetlaw Hospital?**

The last recruitment at Bassetlaw Hospital received one applicant who was offered a post but didn't take up the offer. The next tranche of paediatric nurses will complete their paediatric training and register with in the Nursing and Midwifery Council in September/October 2017 and we intend to time our next full recruitment drive with when they become available, while our Clinical Educators routinely attend recruitment fairs at universities throughout the year and promote both of our sites to soon-to-qualify students.

### **Is this permanent?**

If we are able to fully and safely staff the Ward in the future, we will re-open to overnight admissions; however we do not anticipate that this will occur in the short term. We will review the position in October 2017.

### **Does this mean I need to go to Doncaster or Sheffield Emergency Department if my child falls ill in the night?**

Regardless of the time of day, we urge parents to bring children needing urgent care to Bassetlaw Hospital's Emergency Department. Here we will have a paediatric senior doctor on duty 24 hours a day.

### **In light of these changes, will Maternity and the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) close?**

No, the current obstetric-led maternity service is continuing and we have ensured 24/7 paediatric senior cover at Bassetlaw Hospital to maintain safety on SCBU and to the Labour Suite. High-risk births are cared for at Doncaster and this has been the service for a number of years.

### **I've been told there is currently no Consultant Paediatrician at Bassetlaw Hospital, is this true?**

We have a Paediatrician on site from 9am to 6pm purely for the Children's Ward and a dedicated on-call Paediatric Consultant covering the time in-between. We also have a Registrar on site 24/7, who can make the clinical decision if a child needs to be transferred.

### **I've heard that the Breast Unit is also being closed?**

The Breast Unit at Bassetlaw Hospital is not closing or being transferred to Doncaster and no services are being cut. Sheffield Teaching Hospitals currently provides some specialist breast clinics at Bassetlaw Hospital but due to an unusual combination of retirements and maternity leave affecting their Specialist Consultant Oncologists who provide the service, we have temporarily moved two

clinics to Doncaster Royal Infirmary until the Consultants return from maternity leave. In most cases, the Trust will continue to see and deliver care for breast cancer patients at Bassetlaw Hospital.

**Does this change mean that Bassetlaw Hospital will eventually close?**

No, as Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals our Worksop site remains an integral part of the Trust and this will remain the case for the foreseeable future. We are proud to serve Bassetlaw and we have only made changes to ensure we can safely treat young patients.

**When is the ward open?**

8am to 10pm each day of the week (including weekends). While a senior Paediatrician will also be available 24 hours a day.

**Will there be enough beds available at Doncaster Royal Infirmary due to the admissions from Bassetlaw?**

At Doncaster Royal Infirmary there is enough capacity for the population we serve and the outside area. To date we have never transferred a child to another trust for non-clinical reasons and we don't foresee this happening in the future. Our current bed-base is 48, second only to Sheffield.

**Is the Maternity Unit closing at Bassetlaw?**

No, we remain committed to delivering a Maternity service at Bassetlaw now and into the future.

**I've been told that a minibus has been provided for children to be transferred to Doncaster is this true?**

The majority of transfers are undertaken by a private ambulance, crewed by appropriately trained staff, providing transfers to Doncaster. This is jointly commissioned by the Trust and NHS Bassetlaw Clinical Commissioning Group at a cost of £3,500 a week.

**Is it true that these changes have been made for financial reasons?**

No money is being saved by this change; this is based upon safety, and is not a financial decision. The Ward is funded for 12 (whole time equivalent) band 5 Registered Children's Nurses. Currently we only have six, and have been unsuccessful in recruiting to these vacant posts. Admitting children without a full complement of staff would be unsafe and we will review staff availability in October 2017.

**Based on what guidance have you made this decision to change?**

Facing the Future guidance from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, which is accessible here: <http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/facingthefuture>. Recommendations from this document have already been implemented in a number of hospitals.

**Have there been any issues since closing overnight?**

All children needing overnight care have been transferred safely to Doncaster Royal Infirmary where they bypass the Emergency Department at DRI and are admitted to the Children's Unit. Those awaiting transfer are cared for at Bassetlaw Hospital by our skilled clinicians and paediatricians who are on-site 24/7.

Our team work very hard to make sure this experience is as comfortable and seamless as possible, and if parents encounter any issues, we ask that they speak to a member of staff or contact the Trust directly.

**How successful was the advertisement posted in March?**

From our initial advertisement in March, as requested by many on social media, we received five applications to our Paediatric nursing positions, four of whom were student nurses qualifying in September and one that was not paediatric trained.

Subsequent to this job advert, we have run a number of open days and attended recruitment events and as a result in the coming days we will be interviewing 16 shortlisted applicants for paediatric nursing and special care baby unit posts, most of whom are soon-to-qualify. With such stiff competition, it is our aim to make sure we are an attractive prospect for potential team members, making Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals their number one choice when choosing a future employer.

**Why does advertising vacant posts cost so much?**

In order to promote vacant positions to the most relevant clinicians and medical professionals, we often use national journals, such as the Nursing Times. Depending on the advert type, size and duration, these can range in price from a few hundred pounds to thousands. As a Trust we try to time these promotions with the availability of staff we intend to recruit, for example targeting the Paediatric nursing cohort graduates who qualify in September.

**How much does it cost to transfer children, and couldn't that money be better spent?**

The private ambulance that we commission in partnership with NHS Bassetlaw CCG costs £14,000 a month. This is to ensure that we have the right service in place for patients that need to be transferred to Doncaster Royal Infirmary. As we have previously stated, this change was not about cost-savings but ensuring we have a safe service for the people of Bassetlaw, and this is the only option while we do not have the right staff in place. If we are able to fully and safely staff the Ward in the future, we will re-open to overnight admissions.

**I've heard that children being assessed at Bassetlaw have to stay in the waiting room which can be very uncomfortable, is this true?**

At Bassetlaw Hospital we have beds, cots and buggies available, and while it may have been appropriate for a child to sit in the waiting room upon admission, if they become uncomfortable or tired, we ask that parents speak to a member of staff who will be happy to oblige with any requests.

**I've heard that Doncaster Royal Infirmary has turned away patients due to a lack of beds, is this true?**

This is incorrect; Doncaster Royal Infirmary has sufficient bed capacity, and historically has never transferred a patient for anything other than medical reasons, such as severity of condition which requires the expertise of Sheffield Children's Hospital.

We take these matters very seriously, if parents feel that their child has been discharged too early, please speak to the on-duty nurse or get in touch with the Trust and we will investigate further.

**I've heard a message was sent to staff stating that the Ward A3 was closing?**

The message that was sent to a section of our staff was actually an instruction on the patient administration system, CaMIS. This instruction is to ensure that children's attendance is correctly clinically coded and recorded, and this was not an announcement of closure.