Barts Health NHS
NHS Trust

Free at the time of need - but not for all. The unspoken issue of providing care to women deemed as overseas visitors.

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Aim- To promote understanding and share our experience of this issue

Objectives-

- **Give an overview of the maternity service in Newham**
- **Summarise relevant DH guidance**
- **Describe the work undertaken to clarify the local midwifery role in this issue**
- **Questions and discussion**

London Borough of Newham

The Maternity Service at Newham

- Newham University Hospital is the main provider of Maternity and Neonatal services to residents in the London Borough of Newham
- 5200 Births per year, 20% of those taking pace in our Birth Centre
- One of the most deprived communities in England in social, housing and health outcome terms
- The borough has the highest birth rate and one of the youngest populations in England. It is the fastest growing and most diverse population in England

The Maternity Service at Newham

- High incidence of Diabetes and other maternal medical complications
- Newham's population presents significant challenges for the provision of healthcare, Maternity being one of them
- CS Rate around 32%
- We have now completed a £17.5 Million redevelopment of the Maternity Unit.
- The service is now merged into the newly formed Barts Health NHS Trust

The issue at Newham

- Around 250 women per year are identified as overseas visitors.

- This means that they are entitled to NHS care however they are liable for charges.

DH Guidance- Based on The National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2011

Maternity Care is classified as 'immediately necessary treatment' which means that the hospital trust cannot delay or withhold the treatment while establishing the patient's chargeable status or ability to pay. The Department of Health's Guidance states that "because of the severe health risks associated with conditions such as eclampsia and pre-eclampsia, maternity services should be not be withheld if the woman is unable to pay in advance."

Local Overseas Visitor Policy

- Women were interviewed by the Overseas Patient Officer in the Maternity Booking Centre, often with the midwife present as part of their booking visit.
- Overseas Status was flagged on the Maternity EPR system.

Maternity Booking Centre Flow

1 Women was being seen by overseas patient officer either before or during the booking appointment often with the midwife present

3 Women was informed of charges

4 Scans etc arranged and rest of AN care planned

Incidents that raised our awareness of the issue

- Midwives during SOM annual reviews expressing that they were uncomfortable with involvement in discussions around payment for care
- Women leaving the hospital before the booking was complete
- Women declining PN care as they could not afford it
- A women came to AN clinic with a 3 week old baby that her mother had delivered for her at home. She explained that she was fearful of the bills she would receive.

So what did we do??

- Series of meetings with Maternity Action, Consultant MW, HOM & Matron
- Met with Finance department
- Contributed to a review of the Trust Overseas visitor policy

Maternity Booking Centre- Now

1 Women is seen by a midwife for booking history

2 Scans etc arranged and rest of AN care planned

3 Women is seen by the overseas patient officer and informed if charges apply

What did we achieve?

1 Changes to Local Policy that-

- Remove barriers to clinical care on EPR
- Remove clinical staff from conversations with women relating to finance

2 Raised awareness-

- Training for staff

Summary

- A sensitive issue that is seldom discussed

- Locally we have tried to separate clinical care from discussions relate to payment to try to reduce barriers to maternity care

Acknowledgements

Ros Bragg
Maternity Action

Noel Simmons-Smith
Head of Financial Management
NUHT