



Maidstone Birth Centre Five Year Report 2011-2016



October 2016

**Maidstone Birth Centre
 Maternity outcomes and 5 year report
 September 2011- September 2016**

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Executive Summary

Midwife-led care for low risk women has been shown to improve a range of clinical outcomes, reduce the amount of intervention in labour and increase satisfaction with care. The Birth Place in England study conducted by the National Perinatal Epidemiology Centre (2011)¹ found that, for low risk women, birth is as safe for babies in a Birth Centre as it is in hospital, with the added benefit of reduced intervention for the mother, including lower rates of caesarean, instrumental birth and episiotomy. The study also demonstrated that midwifery led birth centres are more cost-effective than consultant led birthing centres for standard deliveries because the national tariff for a delivery is the same regardless of location.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence² and the recently published National Maternity Review³ recommends that all women with an uncomplicated pregnancy should be offered the choice of where they would like to give birth, including the option of a midwifery led unit (Birth Centre) as well as at home or in hospital.

Maidstone Birth Centre opened 5 years ago following a reconfiguration of maternity services at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust. It has become a popular choice for place of birth with more than 400 births per year. During the last 5 years, there have been more than 2,000 births at the Birth Centre, equating to around 8% per year of all babies born at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, which is significantly above the national average for births outside the main hospital environment.⁴ Several women have returned to the Birth Centre to have a second or third baby and one mother has had all four of her babies at the Centre.

Clinical outcomes for women starting labour at the Birth Centre have been consistently excellent, with more than 88% of women having a normal birth. Transfer rates for women who develop problems in labour compare favourably with those in the Birth Place study and there are safe systems and processes in place to ensure that appropriate women use the Centre and that the service maintains a high standard of clinical governance. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected Maternity Services at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust in November 2014 and their subsequent report relating to the Birth Centre gave high praise:

'Staff were engaged with providing a high level of care to women and their families'. They also highlighted *'outstanding practice and innovation'* at the Birth Centre, which includes research and audit projects that have been presented at national forums or published in national journals.

Feedback from women and their families is consistently outstanding, with results from the Friends and Family test consistently placing the Birth Centre as the one of highest scoring areas for the whole of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

In April 2016 the management of Crowborough Birthing Centre was taken over by Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, demonstrating that the model of care is highly valued by the Trust. This merger provides both Birth Centres with an exciting opportunity to give women across the Trust real choice around place of birth and to work together to provide centres of midwifery excellence to benefit women and their families.

For further details please see the main body of the report



The Thompson family: First birth at Maidstone Birth Centre
27 September 2011

"Maidstone Birth Centre is a real home from home, very professional and a very welcoming environment. A really good experience"



Lisa Donlon and her four children pictured in 2016. All four were born at Maidstone Birth Centre.

"It was the best experience ever. I cannot fault the staff everyone was amazing. I had all four babies in the same birthing pool. I would recommend the centre to anyone".

Forward from Hannah Appelgren, Chair for Birth Voices (Maternity Services Liaison Committee)

'Birth Voices MSLC is thrilled to have such a wonderful birth centre available to women and their partners in West Kent, offering further choice of place of birth. Women we speak to about their birth experiences have all praised the birth centre and the staff that work there, describing how valuable they found the midwife-led care. The importance of having a positive birth experience cannot be underestimated. Birth is a fundamental life changing event, for both women and their partners in the transition to parenthood and should be one that is looked back on with fond memories'.

Hannah

Ms Hannah Appelgren

On behalf of *Birth Voices*

Maternity Services Liaison Committee for Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

1 Background

Maidstone Birth Centre opened on 22 September 2011, following reconfiguration of maternity services at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

The Centre is a purpose built, midwifery led unit that meets the Department of Health recommendations for providing extra choice for women with an uncomplicated pregnancy, wishing to deliver in a home from home environment. Research has demonstrated that a non- clinical birth environment can profoundly effect a woman’s birth experience by helping to reduce fear and anxiety. The Birth Centre staff have worked closely with user representatives to provide a homely and peaceful environment that helps women to feel relaxed and calm.

The Birth Centre facilities include 2 birth rooms, 4 postnatal rooms, a kitchen / diner, a garden area and antenatal areas. There is also a parent education room and 2 antenatal consulting rooms.



Birth rooms

Large birth pools, comfortable furniture and normal birth equipment support women in labour. Women can also choose to use complementary or alternative therapies such as aromatherapy, relaxation techniques and hypnobirthing.



‘The reception area facilitates a feeling of calm and well-being



Postnatal room have double bed so partners can stay

	
<p><i>The kitchen provides a friendly area for parents to make drinks or snacks</i></p>	<p><i>The Garden room leading to a small garden provides a haven for parents seeking relaxation and quiet</i></p>

2 Staffing

The Birth Centre is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is staffed by a core team of dedicated midwives and maternity support workers who work in partnership with Community midwives to provide seamless midwifery led care throughout pregnancy, labour and following the birth. Locally based community midwives carry out all bookings at the Birth Centre which helps encourage women to consider this as choice for place of birth at an early stage of pregnancy. Collaborative working continues throughout the pregnancy and postnatally. Management is provided by a Band 7 midwife and a Matron for Community and Birth Centres. A Consultant Midwife provides senior clinical leadership.

3 Services for women

In addition to antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care the following services are provided for women.

3.1 Parent education

A tour and information evening is held weekly, which can be booked by telephoning the Birth Centre. The session also provides information around active labour and birth.

3.2 Breastfeeding support

The Birth Centre team work in partnership with the Infant feeding co-ordinators, 'Breast Buddy' peer supporters, community midwives and local services to provide feeding support for women and their babies. Breastfeeding initiation rates are around 83%. After discharge home, women can access extra help by telephoning the

Birth Centre for phone advice or to arrange to come to the Birth Centre for an 'ad hoc' support session.

3.3 24 hour help line and drop in facility

Approximately 850 telephone calls from women requesting advice and support are dealt with each month by the Birth Centre staff.

3.4 Complementary therapies

Many of the midwives at the Birth Centre have received training to provide a range of complementary and alternative therapies to help women in labour. These include aromatherapy, reflexology, hypnobirthing, sterile water injections and acupuncture. See the maternity website for further information.

3.5 Baby's first medical examinations

There has been significant investment in training midwives at the Birth Centre and Community to undertake the Newborn and Infant Physical Examination (NIPE) course. A baby's first medical examination can now be performed at the Birth Centre and this service is also available for women who have given birth at Tunbridge Wells hospital.

3.6 TENS and breast pumps

The Birth Centre provides a scheme for women to loan TENS (Transcutaneous Nerve Stimulation) devices to help them cope in labour. A voluntary contribution is requested to cover the cost of pads, repairs and replacements.

A similar scheme operates for women to loan a breast pump. Women can access this service by telephoning the Birth Centre.

'The staff are absolutely outstanding and a credit to the midwifery team as well as the NHS.'



4 Information for women

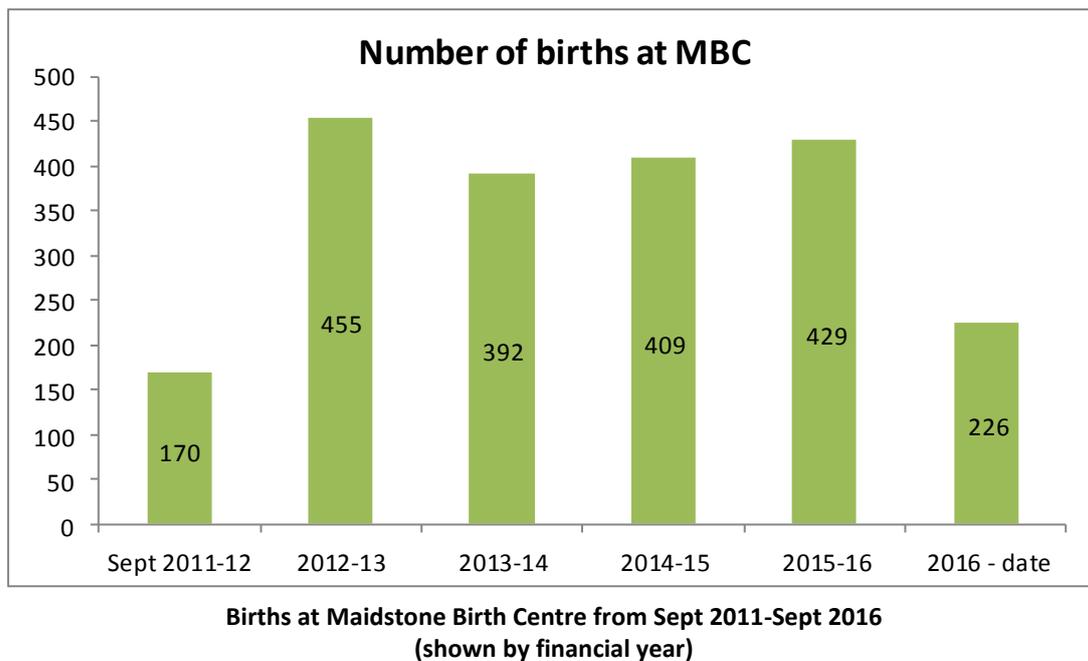
The maternity website provides extra information for women regarding choice for place of birth, including a short film showing the facilities at the Birth Centre and information about suitability and arrangements for transfer if problems occur. Information about the Birth Centre is also available on external websites, including *Which?* and *Birth Choice UK*.

Community midwives discuss place of birth with women at booking and at subsequent antenatal visits. Women are given an Information leaflet 'Choice for place of birth' at booking and a further 'flyer' about the Birth Centre following their 23 week ultrasound scan. Women choosing to have their baby at the Birth Centre have an antenatal appointment at around 34 weeks to ensure suitability and to formulate a birth plan. This provides an opportunity for women to clarify what facilities are available and what would happen if there is a need for transfer in labour.

Individual cases that do not clearly fit a 'low risk' or 'high risk' category are discussed at the multi professional meeting (Silver Star meeting), to ensure a clear plan, including decision around place of birth, is agreed and then discussed with the individual woman.

5 Overview of Clinical Outcomes

From September 2011-September 2016 more than 2,000 babies have been born at the Birth Centre, 660 of these to first-time mothers.



The Birth Place in England study (2011) studied a total of 64,000 women with an uncomplicated pregnancy and found that birth is as safe for babies in a Birth Centre as it is in hospital, with the added benefit of reduced intervention for the mother. This includes lower rates of caesarean, instrumental birth and episiotomy. During the last five years, Maidstone Birth Centre staff have worked closely with the Trust IT informatics department, to collect data for clinical outcomes and transfer rates to facilitate comparison with data from the Birth Place study and births in other maternity settings. The data also provides further evidence about the safety and effectiveness of this model of care.

5.1 Use of water for labour or birth

The large birth pools at Maidstone Birth Centre have been a popular choice for women during the last 5 years. Research findings have shown that water helps women cope with pain in first stage of labour and increases satisfaction with the birth experience.⁵

Approximately 84% of women at Maidstone used the birth pool at some point in their labour and 73% of women actually gave birth in water.

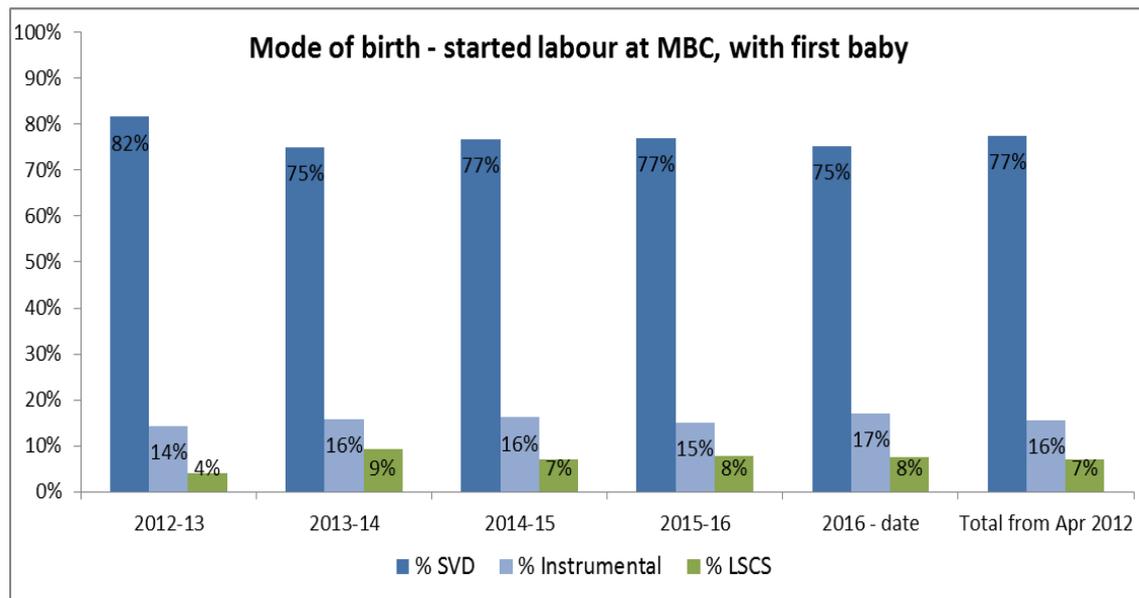
'Thank you! Our second baby at MBC #97 and #1083. Wonderful water birth, magical experience'

5.2 Episiotomy

The Birth Centre reports a low rate of episiotomy (1.7%) for the five years. (This is 4% for first time mothers and 0.6% for second and subsequent births). Rates from the Birth Place study reported that similar 'low risk' women would expect to have a rate of 28% for first time mothers and 7.4% for subsequent births.



5.3 Birth outcomes for women having their first baby

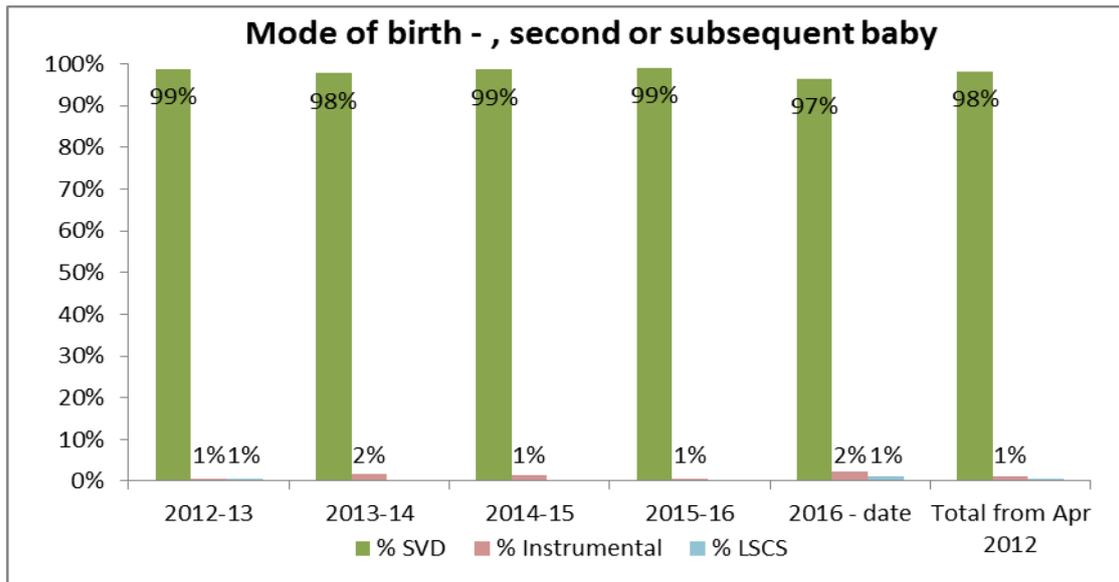


77% of first time mothers starting labour at the Birth Centre had a normal delivery. 7% required a caesarean birth and 15% an instrumental birth.

Data from the Birth Place study for 'low risk' first- time mothers giving birth in hospital clearly demonstrates the advantages of starting labour in an out of hospital setting. It found that only 65.7% would expect to have a normal delivery. 13% would require a caesarean birth and 21.3% an instrumental birth.



5.4 Birth outcomes for women having their second or subsequent baby



The outcomes are also excellent for women having their second or subsequent birth. 98% had a normal birth, 1.2% had an instrumental birth and only 0.4% required a caesarean.

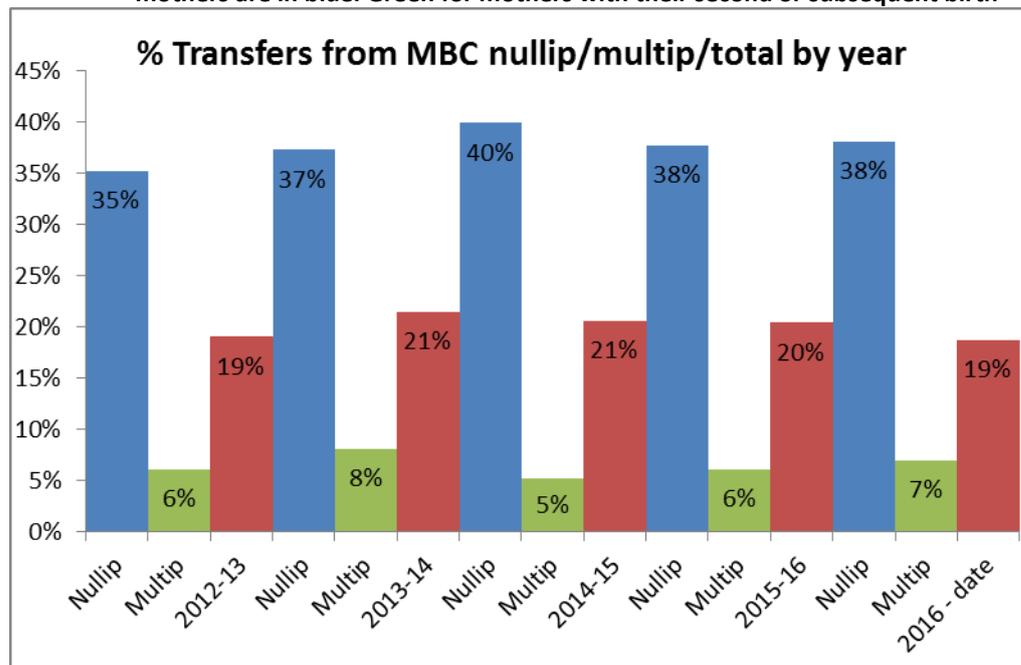
Recent national guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2014) indicate that similar women giving birth in a hospital setting would expect to have a four fold increase in caesarean section rate and 3 fold increase in instrumental birth.

5.5 Transfers

If a problem occurs during labour, it may be necessary for a woman to be transferred to hospital by ambulance accompanied by their midwife. The most common reasons for transfer are slow progress in labour, or detection of meconium stained liquor. The Birth place study reported that 36.5% of women having their first baby would require transfer in labour and 9.4% of women having their second or subsequent baby.

Unfortunately (due to meconium) I was transferred to Pembury for delivery. However I was able to come back and experienced what I feel should be award winning care. Don't worry about being transferred if you need to its very straight forward'

Transfers from Maidstone Birth Centre showing overall rates (in red) Transfer rates for first- time mothers are in blue. Green for mothers with their second or subsequent birth



The overall transfer rates for women starting their labour at Maidstone Birth Centre are 20%. Rates were slightly higher for first time mothers than seen in the Birth place study (37.5% vs 36.5%), but lower for second and subsequent births (6.6% vs 9.4%). Following transfer and subsequent birth in hospital, many women chose to return to the Birth Centre for their postnatal care.

Around 1% of babies required transfer to the Neonatal Unit at Tunbridge Wells hospital and the vast majority only required a 1-2 day stay.

Despite the transfer to Pembury (which was all handled seamlessly by you all), we were welcomed back and felt so calm and supported here'

6 Feedback from women using the Birth Centre

The feedback the Birth Centre has received over the past five years has been consistently outstanding. The popularity is largely due to women who have given birth at the Centre sharing their experiences within the local community, which in turn increases other women's confidence in choosing this model of care.

'From the moment we arrived here we were looked after like we were family'

Women are encouraged to complete the Trust's Friends and Family questionnaire prior to postnatal discharge and the return rate for these is high (75%). Results demonstrate high levels of satisfaction with the Birth Centre which is consistently placed as one of the highest scoring clinical areas within the trust as a whole, with an average score for quality of care 4.98 out of 5 and 0% percentage of people NOT likely to recommend the Birth Centre to family or friends.

Women are also asked to complete a survey about the care received to enable the staff to have detailed feedback and to identify any areas that could be improved. Scores have consistently averaged above 98% for the whole 5 year period and monthly results are displayed in the Birth Centre Reception area so they are visible to women, their families and visitors.

Many women write about their experience in the Birth Centre 'Visitor's book' which can subsequently be viewed by women considering the Birth Centre for possible place of birth. Comments throughout the years have been consistently outstanding for women who gave birth at the Centre. They have also been very positive for women who were transferred to Tunbridge Wells for a complication detected in labour and subsequently returned for their postnatal care.

Feedback from service users has been collated over the five years from the outset to ensure the Birth Centre is women centred.

Birth Voices (Maternity Services Liaison Committee at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust) have audited the birth environment and facilities for women at the Birth Centre in 2012 and 2014, using the NCT *Better Birth Environment tool kit*. The results for the most recent audit were maximum marks for all categories and a final comment from one of the auditors as below:

'I chatted to both parents and staff while I was at the Maidstone Birth Centre, and what stood out to me is that all of them really like being there. The staff take a pride in the centre – how it looks, how it feels and go 'above and beyond' in their support of parents' individual physical, emotional and spiritual needs both during labour and birth and in the transition to parenthood'

7 Learning Environment

During the last five years, the Birth Centre has developed a multi professional learning environment. A Birth Centre work experience program for career obstetricians was developed in partnership with a Consultant Obstetrician who also acts as Head of the Kent Medical Deanery. This provides an opportunity for junior medical staff to understand the Birth Centre model of care and how good midwifery practice can facilitate normal birth and avoid unnecessary medical intervention. A report about the scheme was published in a national journal⁶ and also presented at a multi-professional regional conference.

Student midwives are allocated to the Birth Centre during their midwifery training which enables them to gain valuable experience in midwifery led care.

The Birth Centre also provides learning opportunities for medical students, student nurses, midwifery students training at external universities requiring elective placements and occasionally paramedics requiring clinical or observational experience. Evaluations and feedback from students demonstrate that excellent learning opportunities are being provided for all professional groups:

'At the birth centre I was shown research data that demonstrated the efficacy of this advice, which makes me want to suggest it to women'

Junior doctor

'Very welcoming staff, well informed and friendly, Good to experience a different mentality to that experienced in central London Hospitals. I gained appreciation for more family centred holistic approach'

Medical Student.

'Very welcoming atmosphere with friendly staff. Felt happy to ask lots of questions. Was given lots of opportunities to gain new experiences' Student midwife.

Opportunities for staff learning and development are encouraged at the Birth Centre. Many of the midwives and maternity support workers have undertaken additional education and training to widen their scope of practice and improve the quality of services available for women.

8 Clinical Governance

Women who attend the Birth Centre have been appropriately assessed as 'low risk' during their pregnancy. Any unplanned births with risk factors present are transferred to hospital, unless the birth is imminent. Staff are trained to deal with unexpected emergencies and practice their skills regularly.

All transfers are reviewed and discussed by the multidisciplinary team as appropriate to ensure high standards of care are maintained at all times. Senior staff communicate regularly with staff from South East Coast Ambulance service (SECAMB) to ensure that a safe and smooth process for transferring women in labour is maintained at all times.

'A wonderful experience and the greatest care and attention imaginable'

9 Research and Innovation

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) highlighted *'outstanding practice and innovation'* at the Birth Centre, which includes research and audit projects that have been presented at national forums or published in national journals. Some of the projects and initiatives developed at the Birth Centre have been listed below:

- A range of complementary therapies have been introduced following appropriate training of midwives, including aromatherapy, hypnobirthing, acupuncture, reflexology. This provides greater choice for women in relation to provision of coping strategies for labour and birth.
- Two further therapies have been pioneered at the Birth Centre and then adopted by the rest of the maternity services during the last 2 years:

Moxibustion for women with a baby in the breech position. (This is a complementary therapy that research has shown to be helpful in encouraging babies to turn to the head down position in late pregnancy).

Sterile water injections for treating severe back pain in labour. This has proved so successful that this practice is also being shared with other maternity units.

- The Maidstone Birth couch was developed in partnership with *NHS Innovations*. Several other Trusts have subsequently purchased the couch



The Maidstone Birth couch
Highlighted as an
'outstanding innovation' by
the CQC, 2014

- Audits of practice, including documentation and management of 3rd stage of labour have assisted staff in identifying areas for practice development.
- The use of IGELS to assist neonatal resuscitation and transfer has successfully been pioneered at the Birth Centre in partnership with the Trust Resus team. This has since been extended to community midwives so they are available for homebirths.
- Several staff in the Birth Centre have won individual Trust annual awards for providing outstanding care for women and enhancing the reputation of the Trust during the last 5 years. The Birth Centre team have also won the Trust 'Team of the year' award.
- A randomised controlled trial investigating acupuncture for starting labour for first time mothers with a post term pregnancy was conducted at the Birth Centre. It was subsequently published in the British Journal of Midwifery in 2015

10 Working with Crowborough Birth Centre

Crowborough Birthing Centre became part of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust from April 2016, thus enabling all women within the Trust to have the choice of giving birth in a free standing midwifery led unit. This is already increasing the percentage of women giving birth in an 'out of hospital setting'.

It is hoped this will rise much further in time, especially as the improved clinical outcomes seen for low risk women with this model of care become more widely known.

11 National and Global Influence

During recent years there have been encouraging signs, including media reports, that more people are aware of the benefits of the Birth Centre model for 'low risk' women and their families. The Birth Centre team at Maidstone have contributed to this agenda on a national and international basis by the following activities:

- The clinical outcomes and achievements of Maidstone Birth Centre have been presented at several national Conferences.
- In partnership with the Trust Communications department, staff have worked with the media to promote the Birth Centre model of care. This includes television, radio and newspaper reports such as the BBC Victoria Derbyshire news program, Meridian TV, The Times national newspaper, Radio Kent, Kent Messenger, Down's Mail

- The Birth Centre work experience program for medical staff was published in the 2015 Spring edition of the Royal College of Midwives Journal.
- The Sterile water injections project was presented as a Webinar with the Royal College of Midwives in August 2016. This generated a large amount of interest and discussion with more than 60 midwives including midwives from Australia! The sterile water injections project has also been accepted as a poster presentation at the Royal College of Midwives annual conference, 2016.
- The Royal College of Midwives Global Midwifery Twinning Project provided an opportunity for a member of the Birth Centre team to share experience and learning with a new Birth Centre in Kathmandu in Nepal. The 3 week visit was performed in a voluntary capacity, with the express aim of working in partnership with the staff to increase the number of women delivering in the Birth Centre and to facilitate development of guidelines and presentation of clinical outcomes to demonstrate safety and benefits.



*RCM Global Midwifery
Twinning project 2015*

*Sharing experience and
learning with maternity staff
in a Birth Centre
Kathmandu, Nepal.*

- Work experience placements and elective placements have been given to midwives from across the UK, including Leicester and Northern Ireland. These placements have been highly evaluated.
- The acupressure study conducted at the Birth Centre was published in the British Journal of Midwifery in 2015
- There have been numerous visitors to the Birth Centre since it has opened, including many NHS Trusts wishing to set up their own Birth Centres. Visitors have included high profile midwifery leaders from the Royal College of Midwives, senior delegates from the National Childbirth Trust and senior policy makers from the Department of Health. There have also been international visitors from China, South America and Sweden



Three midwives from Sweden visit Maidstone Birth Centre during an exchange visit in 2012

- Maidstone Birth Centre is an active member of the South East Birth Centre Forum. Guidelines and information are frequently shared with other units regionally and nationally.

11 Vision for the next 5 years

Over the past five years the Birth Centre team have worked in partnership with the entire maternity service, user representatives and stakeholders to develop a service that is safe, effective and woman focussed. During the next 5 years the team will work towards implementing the recommendations set out in the 2016 Maternity review, ensuring that local women have a real choice about location of birth.

The Birth Centre teams at Maidstone and Crowborough will continue to work together to promote the birth centre model of care and clinical advantages for women with an uncomplicated pregnancy giving birth in this setting. They will continue to provide high standards of evidence based care and be active in promoting research, innovation and good practice initiatives.



Maidstone Birth Centre staff on eve of opening September 22 2011



*Happy mums and babies
outside the Birth Centre
2012*

Sarah Gregson, Consultant Midwife
Karen Leeson and Janine Absalom, Birth Centre Managers
Alison Mendes, Matron for Community and Birth Centres
Susan Powley, IT midwife
Jenny Cleary, Head of Midwifery, Gynaecology and Sexual Health
And the Birth Centre team

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