

Independent Investigation into East Kent Maternity Services

Media Statement

Thursday 23rd April 2020

East Kent Maternity Services: Bill Kirkup's Independent Investigation

Investigation into East Kent Maternity Services Begins.

The independent investigation into East Kent maternity services is underway despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr Bill Kirkup has launched the investigation into the performance of the Trust since 2009.

And he said he would make the best possible use of technology while the current public health restrictions remain in place.

Dr Kirkup said:

“ ” I will lead an investigation that is fair, thorough and independent. I am beginning by introducing myself to families so their concerns can form a central part of my investigation.

Face-to-face contact with those affected will be a crucial part of how this investigation is to proceed.

Clearly, the current public health crisis makes that impossible, but use of modern technology means the important work I will lead can – and should – get started immediately.

Health Minister *Nadine Dorries* announced an independent investigation into maternity services at hospitals in Ashford and Margate in February.

Dr Kirkup will head the investigation, after leading an inquiry into maternity services at Morecambe Bay Hospital and being part of the groundbreaking Hillsborough Independent Panel.

He said:

“ ” I hope any families with concerns about the maternity services they received in this period will feel able to let me know so that the investigation can be as thorough as I intend it to be.

Continued...

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A panel of experts will be appointed to assist Dr Kirkup's work, with the terms of reference to be announced in due course, following engagement with the families and local stakeholders, including political representatives.

It is expected that the investigation will cover the period since 2009 and will report in 2021.

Notes to Editors

1. The investigation will be looking at the maternity and neonatal services provided by East Kent University NHS Foundation Trust.
2. Bill Kirkup has led a number of independent investigations including into maternity services in Morecambe Bay which reported in 2015.
3. When NHS chief executive Sir Simon Stevens, asked him to lead the East Kent investigation, Dr Kirkup explained he would first need to complete his work looking into the death of Elizabeth Dixon, a baby who died following mistakes at a hospital in Surrey. It is for this reason that the East Kent Investigation is starting now.
4. In the intervening period, a small support team has been put in place: Ken Sutton, as Secretary to the investigation and his assistant, Ann Ridley, both of whom have worked with Bill Kirkup previously, initially with the Hillsborough Independent Panel and subsequently on other investigations.
5. Preparatory work has been undertaken enabling initial contact with families.
6. It is not intended to give a running commentary on the investigation, but Ken Sutton and Ann Ridley will be happy to respond to any queries.

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