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FUTURE FIT CONSULTATION
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Dear Madam/Sir

Llanfyllin WI as a group wish to contribute to the discussion on healthcare delivered in Shropshire and Powys generally and to the Future Fit consultation in particular.

As a group we would support Option 1 whereby the A&E plus Obstetric Unit are sited at Shrewsbury. This is because we believe it important that the time and distance travelled in an emergency are kept reasonable. We have also been assured by Powys that plans are being put in place to ensure that routine care is located as close to our rural communities as possible to ensure safety and convenience.

As a meeting we also wanted to express our continuing concern regarding maternity care in Shropshire. WI research has shown the importance of 'a midwife I know and trust' to mothers. We continue to be concerned at the cuts to community based maternity care at Oswestry, Ludlow and Bridgnorth, depriving women of the evidence based care they need for the birth both in terms of location (Birthplace Survey) and continuity of carer (The Lancet Series). We are also concerned regarding the removal of the highly valued postnatal care and breastfeeding support in these locations.

We discussed the issue of transport. In a rural area we are concerned for the safety and wellbeing of mothers and babies travelling long distances on narrow country roads, to access care in labour and also antenatally and postnatally. This is especially difficult for women with limited access to private transport and who have other childcare responsibilities. We are also concerned that low risk women are being forced to travel long distances to a hospital when evidence in the Birthplace Survey shows that they would be safer, and the costs cheaper for the NHS, in the local free standing midwifery unit.

We have also heard news reports of research indicating that it is not safe for newborn babies to be travelling long distances in a car seat – the research showed reduction of blood oxygen for instance, occurring within 30 minutes. We know that many women have to travel for longer than 30 minutes to reach home from hospital after the birth.

For all these reasons this WI wishes to raise its concern regarding the cutting of maternity care at Oswestry, Ludlow and Bridgnorth. We think that the safety and convenience of women and their families needs to be taken into consideration when making decisions to cut these and other maternity services. Future Fit should be about ensuring services are conveniently located for all those who need them.

We look forward to your considered response.
Yours sincerely

Ruth Weston on behalf of Llanfyllin WI