



CQC rates maternity services at Royal Bournemouth Hospital as requires improvement

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has rated maternity services at Royal Bournemouth Hospital, run by University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust, requires improvement, following an inspection last September.

This was the first inspection of the service in its new location in the Birth, Emergency, Critical Care and Child Health (BEACH) building. Maternity services are now based at this new purpose-built unit that provides antenatal, triage, birth and postnatal care. CQC carried out the inspection following the service's move in March 2025 to assess how well the new unit was functioning and whether it was keeping women and babies safe.

Inspectors found the department was in breach of the regulations regarding how the service is being managed.

Following this inspection of the maternity department, well-led and safe have been rated requires improvement. Effective, caring and responsive were rated as good.

Catherine Campbell, CQC deputy director of hospitals, secondary and specialist care for the South-West, said:

“When we visited maternity services at Royal Bournemouth Hospital, we found committed staff doing their best in a busy new unit. But leaders didn't always have a clear understanding of the risks women were facing, or the staffing pressures building up across the service. This meant women weren't always triaged quickly, and delays could affect the safety of care.

“Women told us staff treated them with kindness and compassion, and we saw this during our visit, but ongoing shortages, high sickness and gaps in the rota made it harder for staff to give people the timely support they needed.

“We also found the newborn security policy hadn't been updated for the new building, and recovery bay CCTV cameras compromised women's privacy and dignity. The team acted promptly to remove the cameras and update the security policy, which was reassuring.

“However, there were strong areas of practice too. Women felt involved in decisions, enjoyed the privacy of their own rooms, and we saw midwives and doctors working well together.

“CQC has set out the improvements the service must make and has received immediate assurances in several areas. Inspectors will keep the service under close review and re-inspect to check progress.”

Inspectors found:

- The maternity service frequently left the advice line unstaffed, diverting calls to triage or the labour ward and delaying urgent advice for women.
- Staff often delayed the induction of labour process, leaving some women waiting many hours or days and increasing distress and the likelihood of intervention.
- Staffing shortages and limited theatre capacity led staff to cancel some elective caesarean sections, creating uncertainty and increasing anxiety for women.
- The service met all ten standards in a review of monitoring babies during labour, strengthening safety for women.

However,

- Staff enabled 79% of women to book their first appointment by 10 weeks, exceeding national targets and helping women begin pregnancy care earlier.
- Women reported positive experiences of person-centred care, saying staff involved them in decisions, supported them, and listened to their concerns.
- Women said they liked having their own room and that their partners could stay with them.
- The service had specialist midwives to support vulnerable women and consultant obstetricians were present for difficult births.

The report will be published on CQC's [website](#) in the coming days.

CQC refers to women, but recognises and respects that some transgender men, non-binary people and people with variations in sex characteristics or who are intersex may also use maternity services and experience some of the same issues.