



# Moray Maternity Service Community Engagement and Feedback Report

Published March 2023

**This report encompasses reflections and future hopes for maternity services in Moray.**

**In the spirit in which this report has been produced, we have asked campaign group Keep Mum to write the foreword below. We would like to thank everyone who has helped develop this document. We will continue to engage throughout the journey as we head towards a consultant-led service and beyond.**

### Foreword

We welcome this feedback report, which helps ensure women's birth experiences and their reflections are placed decisively at the heart of maternity services.

Birth stories should never be dismissed as anecdotal evidence, nor women's experiences minimised or trivialised. Those contained within this report speak eloquently of a maternity service in Moray which is causing ongoing anxiety and demonstrates the urgent need to re-introduce a consultant-led maternity service.

Keep MUM's aim is for most babies to be able to be born in Moray. It would appear, from this report, that Moray women want that too and we are encouraged to hear that the plan to achieve that is now underway.

Keep MUM

## Background

On 30 March 2022, the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Health announced the intention to establish a consultant-led maternity unit at Dr Gray's Hospital following a report produced by the independent review panel in 2021.

In July 2022, NHS Grampian recruited a community engagement manager dedicated to maternity engagement across Grampian. Engagement activity during the second half of 2022 focussed on Moray, to ensure the development and implementation of the Moray Maternity Service Plan is progressed with input from service users and the wider community.

## Aim

The aim of engaging with the local community around maternity service provision both now and in the future, is to ensure that service changes are developed collaboratively with a range of stakeholders, particularly those with lived experience. The main objective of recent face to face engagement was to identify key, recurring themes to help drive service improvements (short, medium and long-term) and to support the call for change by demonstrating the impact service reduction has had on service users.



Hannah Ronald (NHS Grampian Maternity Services Community Engagement Manager) and Tessa Winters (Moray Council Equity and Excellence Lead, Education, Communities and Organisational Development) at Bookbug, Buckie Library, December 2022.

## Process

It was agreed at the NHS Grampian Maternity Steering Group (a forum established to forge closer links with the Maternity Voices Partnership as recommended within the external review) that local face to face community engagement sessions were required to reassure the public of NHS Grampian's intention to deliver consultant-led maternity services at Dr Gray's Hospital and to raise awareness of the wider Dr Gray's vision as part of NHS Grampian's plan for the future. The sessions would act as an opportunity to meet the new community engagement manager, discuss concerns and ideas for future service provision, promote the Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) as a forum for ongoing engagement and to share other ways to feedback into the service.

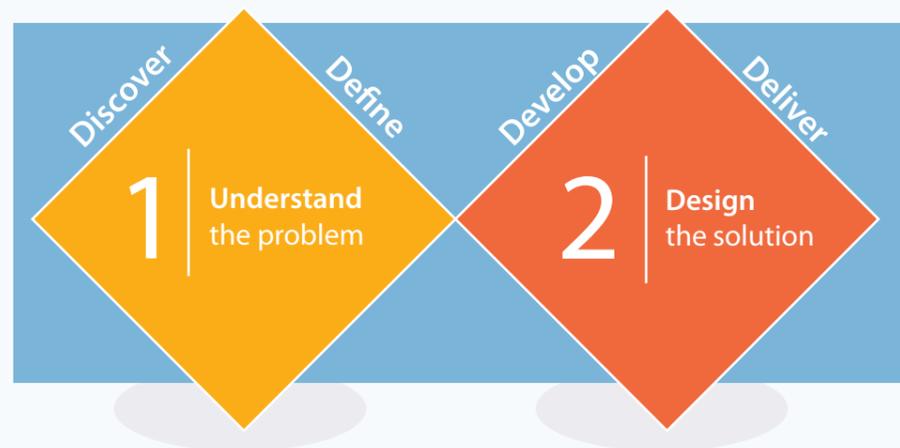
In addition to these engagement sessions, feedback from various sources was reviewed to understand and appreciate the impact the reduction in maternity services at Dr Gray's Hospital has had on Moray women and families. Formal and informal feedback has been gathered from:

- Moray & Banff Maternity Voices Partnership
- Care Opinion
- NHS Grampian Feedback Service
- Public Engagement around Dr Gray's plan for the future
- Keep MUM Campaign Group
- Community Councils
- Local Councillors

These collective sources of influence will help to shape maternity services and ultimately positively impact the experience of Moray maternity service users.

The importance of taking time to understand the problem before designing solutions is outlined by the Scottish Approach to Service Design's double diamond model, outlined below. With this in mind, continuous engagement with staff, service users, the wider community and our partners, will ensure NHS Grampian are well informed to effectively deliver the solutions to this challenging service redesign project at each stage of the process.

NHS Grampian continues to liaise with the Scottish Maternity Engagement project team around methodology and learning from other maternity service engagement processes.



## Engagement Activity & Feedback Sources

### Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP)

Clinical and strategic leaders from NHS Grampian regularly attend the Moray and Banff MVP meetings to listen, update, answer questions and to identify areas for future collaborative working opportunities. This group meets every two months in person and is a hugely valuable meeting for ongoing communication and engagement around Moray and Grampian-wide maternity service improvements.

The Grampian MVP carried out a maternity survey in October 2022 which will be added to the content of this report to provide further feedback and direction on collaborative work projects once the responses have been compiled by the MVP.

NHS Grampian continues to support and promote the MVP with a view to increasing community participation (both in numbers and diversity) and therefore enhance the range of voices. The NHSG equality and diversity team has already translated MVP recruitment posters into Russian, Mandarin, Latvian, Polish and Portuguese.

More information on how to join the MVP can be found [here](#) and for Grampian wide updates you can follow the MVP on **Facebook**.



Kerri Morrison (Community Midwife - Speyside), Linda Tull (Community Midwife - Forres) and Hannah Ronald (NHS Grampian Maternity Services Community Engagement Manager) at Elgin Town Hall, October 2022.

## Face-to-face Community Engagement

A series of face to face engagement sessions were held at a variety of mother and baby groups across Moray between October and December 2022. Many of these groups were suggested by the Moray & Banff MVP via the monthly maternity steering group forum. A leaflet was produced to take to these sessions signposting contact options and ways to feedback into the service, as well as giving an overview for both maternity services and the wider hospital.

Fifteen community groups across Moray were attended by the Maternity Community Engagement Manager with 100+ interactions. Areas covered were Elgin, Buckie, Banff, Forres, Aberlour and Lossiemouth.

Group	Date	Location
Banffshire Breast Friends Breastfeeding Group	Monday 17th Oct	Multi-Purpose Room Chalmers Hospital, Banff
Buckie Breastfeeding Group	Tuesday 25th October	Granny C's Playhouse and Takeaway, Buckie
Elgin Breastfeeding Group	Thursday 27th Oct	Elgin Sports and Community Centre, Trinity Road
Happy Mums Market	Saturday 29th October	Elgin Town Hall
Moray Sling Library	Friday 4th November	Moray College
Bookbugs Forres	Thursday 10th November	Forres Library
Toy Toon coffee shop and play area	Friday 11th November	67 High Street, Elgin
Bookbugs Elgin	Friday 11th November	Elgin Library
Bookbugs Lossiemouth	Thursday 24th November	Lossiemouth Library
BabySteps, Elgin	Thursday 24th November	"The Bosie", 85 High Street, Elgin
Step by Step, Forres	Wednesday 30th November	St Leonard's Church Hall, High St, Forres
Bookbugs Buckie	Thursday 1st December	Buckie Library
Bookbugs Aberlour	Thursday 1st December	Aberlour Library
Baby Bistro, Forres	Monday 5th December	Forres Community Centre
Step by Step, Elgin	Tuesday 6th December	Victoria House, 10 Victoria Crescent, Elgin

The feedback from these interactions was largely positive in terms of maternity care received at Dr Gray's Hospital. However, the desire for a return to consultant-led maternity services at Dr Gray's Hospital to give women more options and reassurance, was clearly expressed along with suggestions for current service improvements.

## Qualitative Feedback

"I've been to Aberdeen for all 4 of my babies. I wouldn't go anywhere else, they are so good and I felt so safe. Some of mine were in neonatal so I don't suppose I have a choice, but if I did I would still choose to go to Aberdeen. They couldn't do enough for me."

"I was worried if I chose to go to Dr Gray's but ended up needing transferred, would it be too far and would my baby be ok? So I chose induction at Aberdeen to avoid uncertainty and that ended up in an emergency section as the induction didn't go as planned."

"I got put up in a hotel in Aberdeen when I was in triage. I wasn't expecting that but it was great because I didn't have to travel home and felt better being close to the hospital."

"The thought of the travel did cause me anxiety. I wasn't sure what would happen if I went into labour before my planned induction date."

"I can't fault any of my care. I had all my care and birth in Elgin and it was perfect, I feel really lucky but I understand why we need full services back at DGH so all mums feel safe."

"Lots of mums already have children and childcare can be an issue. Part of me wanted to go to Aberdeen to feel safer knowing there's more specialist care available if needed, but I also didn't know who would look after the kids and how I would get there."

"I went to Aberdeen and although I would have preferred to go to DGH the midwives were great and I had a really positive experience. You could tell they were really busy but that didn't affect my care."

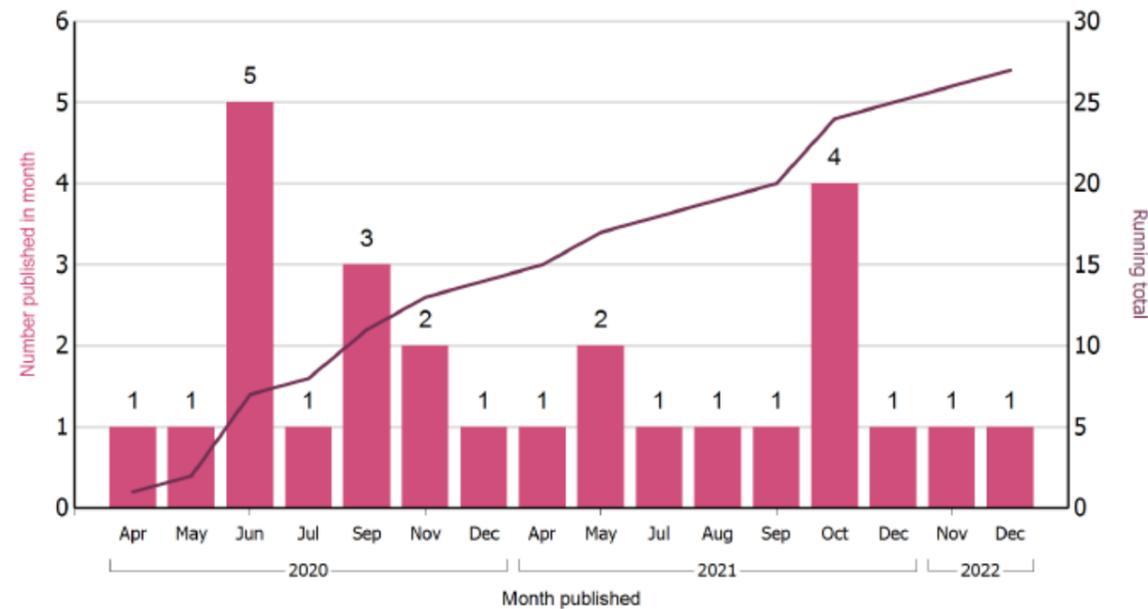
"I had to go up and down to Aberdeen countless times for scans due to my baby's development. I think we should have better scanning locally as not everyone can afford all the travel."

## Care Opinion Feedback



Care Opinion is an independent non-profit feedback platform for health and social care across the UK. NHS Grampian subscribe to and promote feedback via this platform, where service users can share their stories to help make our services better.

Care Opinion stories submitted by women who received maternity care at Dr Gray's Hospital between April 2020 and December 2022 was reviewed. The table below shows there were 27 story submissions during this period.



Patient feedback is mostly submitted to Care Opinion via its website and 100% of feedback is responded to within 14 days. These Care Opinion stories reflect the majority of discussion had during the community engagement sessions; that continuity of care can be limited as a result of most women choosing to deliver their baby in Aberdeen. However, midwifery care received at Dr Gray's Hospital Midwife-Led Unit has remained high quality and person centred throughout the service change and COVID-19 pandemic.

## Testimonials

"I will never forget those midwives and the feeling of calm."

"My midwife was a massive support throughout my pregnancy. Any questions or queries I had were not an issue and I could send her a message and she would always reply."

"We are grateful to all these amazing ladies for their expert care which we were lucky to have locally. They provide an excellent service in challenging times in a challenging location and are to be applauded!"

"As my pregnancy was classed as high risk I was unable to give birth in Elgin but I have nothing but praise for the antenatal care I received there throughout my pregnancy."

"The birth of my daughter was a very special experience due to the staff involved in my care both antenatal, during birth and postnatal. The care and attention I was given by all was so professional, personal and empowering. I could not have managed to get through the difficult journey without the special care and attention I was given. Especially at a time where the maternity unit is under such pressure and a global pandemic...I have never felt so well cared for...the team are a strong entity who support each other as much as they support their patients."

## NHSG Feedback Service

NHS Grampian’s feedback service receives and responds to compliments, enquiries, comments, concerns and complaints. The public can share views on any aspect of NHS Grampian services via the **feedback service**.

Feedback received from women with a Moray postcode who used maternity services at Dr Gray’s Hospital and/or Aberdeen Maternity Hospital between July 2018 and December 2022 showed;

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
9 Complaints	10 Complaints	3 Complaints	10 Complaints	3 Complaints
3 Concerns	24 Compliments	2 Compliments	1 Concern	
5 Enquiries	3 Concerns	2 Comments		
		2 Concerns		

The most common recurring themes from the complaints and concerns were:

- Transfer to AMH – time, discomfort and anxiety.
- Uncertainty and lack of choice in where to give birth.
- Unhappy with care received following miscarriage.

## Community Council Feedback



In addition to attending a Joint Community Council meeting to give a brief on the proposal for Moray maternity services alongside the wider Dr Gray’s Plan for the Future, service user feedback was requested by email from all community councils across Moray. At the time of compiling this report Speyside Community Council, Rothes area, were the only community council to have responded and they provided the following balanced feedback on behalf of families in Rothes:

### Positive experiences

- The few Mums who have given birth in Elgin since 2018 have all voiced a **positive experience**. They cannot fault the care given at Dr Gray’s, the staff are **very experienced and incredibly kind** both post birth and throughout delivery.
- Midwives at Dr Gray’s give **excellent breastfeeding support** post birth as they have time to focus on new mums within the ward.
- There is **no rush** or push to leave and new Mums are welcome to take time to **rest and recover** before returning home with their new family.
- Local Mums have many **positive comments** to make about their local midwives for their **pre-natal and post-natal care**.
- They work incredibly hard to **put anxious minds to rest** when discussing issues surrounding the downgrading of Dr Gray’s.
- Mums of Covid babies cannot **praise their midwives** enough for their care in such a difficult time and they went **over and above to care** for new families when all other face to face services came to an abrupt stop.

### Areas of Concern

- Many mums continue to voice their **anxiety** around a potential trip in labour to Aberdeen or Inverness. This anxiety is particularly heightened this time of year with the **risk of the snow** gates closing in the Glens.
- Many Mums even on green pathways **worry** as situations can change in the blink of an eye in labour and many voice their **concerns about the safety** of their baby in that situation.
- Some Mums feel less anxious when a date is set for a C-section, some Mums with previous sections voice their opinion to **choose further C-sections** over any chance of sporadic delivery due to the chance of travelling such a distance in labour.
- More than one mum in the town has had to **give birth in an ambulance** and note how an **unpleasant and nerve wracking experience** this was.

## Local Councillor Feedback

Feedback was requested by email from all local councillors in Moray. At the time of compiling this report Councillor Juli Harris, Speyside Glenlivet Ward was the only respondent to provide feedback on behalf of her constituents. Feedback received reflects Moray maternity service user experience since July 2018.



*“The following information was collated following informal discussion over several days with mums who have been directly impacted by limited maternity services at Dr Gray’s Hospital, bearing in mind the extensive restrictions put in place during the Covid pandemic”:*

### Areas of Concern

- **Lack of clarity** on the future **role of Raigmore** Hospital in addressing maternity care in Moray, especially in **very rural areas**.
- Ongoing concerns at the high levels of **births outwith Moray** in ARI, due to **lack of provision** of suitable care in Moray.
- Concerns about the **distance to travel** to give birth or for required appointments, **creating fear** in pregnant women with regard to events out with their control, especially after making their individual birth plan.
- Dismay at **solutions not being found** after a number of years to ensure that there is a service in Moray suitable for the majority of pregnant women to give birth here. There is an understanding of **staffing issues** being difficult in rural areas, but this appears to go well beyond this.
- Perception that Dr Gray’s is a hospital that is **failing residents of Moray**, as it is unable to meet the minimum maternity needs of many of its patients, due to **centralisation of services** and procedures in ARI.
- Erring on the safe side has meant that more than half of Moray babies are not born here and also **higher rates of caesarean sections** now than there used to be.
- Need for better, targeted **support for families** with regard to **ante and neonatal** issues, to ensure effective care and transport is offered, where required.
- Need delivery of services and check-ups in the initial months after birth through the **rural practices** that are supportive and consistent.

## Keep MUM Campaign Group

NHSG requested feedback from campaign group Keep MUM, which provided forty five anonymous, detailed birth experiences from Moray women. The feedback themes summarised below reflect the impact the change in service has had on Moray women and their families since summer 2018:



- Anxiety for birth partner having to transfer separately if mother is in ambulance
- Negative impact of unpredictability of place of birth throughout pregnancy
- Discomfort and pain during long transfer when in labour
- Discomfort and pain during journey home
- Long journey home for a newborn baby in a car seat
- Additional stress and worry due to lack of consultant-led option at Dr Dray’s Hospital
- Difficulty finding childcare at short notice for a long period of time
- Cost of travel and accommodation beyond what is reimbursed by NHS Grampian
- Winter weather worry
- Loss of special care baby unit (SCBU) at Dr Dray’s Hospital
- Limited visiting due to distance
- Impact other child/ren left at home without parents, sometimes overnight for the first time
- Impact on mental health
- Unfamiliarity of Aberdeen Maternity Hospital if previously had birth/s at Dr Gray’s Hospital
- Continuity of care compromised
- Felt pressured to book induction to minimise risk and uncertainty
- Possibility of delivery in ambulance or at roadside
- Dr Gray’s Hospital reluctant to assess if first time mums are in labour - sent straight to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
- High risk mums have no choice but to go to Aberdeen Maternity Hospital

Keep MUM are proactive members of the Moray & Banff MVP and have campaigned for improved maternity services in Moray for close to 6 years. They have an active social media presence, especially on Facebook, with a significant number of supporters

<https://www.facebook.com/MaternityUnitMoray>

## Dr Gray's Plan for the Future

The NHS Grampian Board adopted its **Plan for the Future** in June 2022. A key commitment within it was to develop a long term plan for Dr Gray's Hospital with the aim of improving recruitment and retention of staff and to ensure confidence in the local delivery of specialist care.

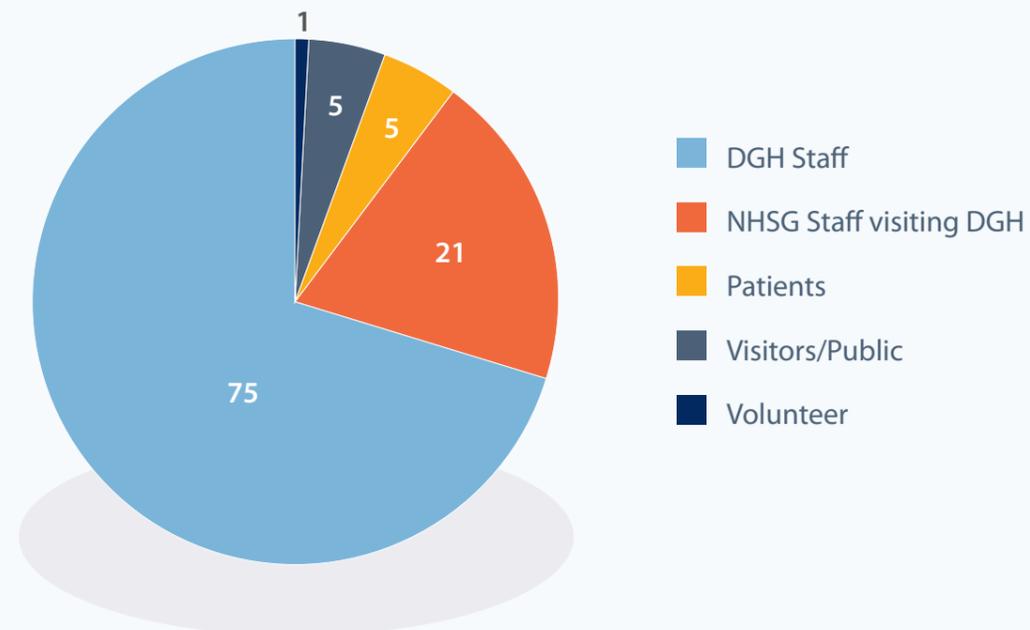
Between June and December 2022, engagement with staff, services users, the public, and partner organisations took place to help identify the main themes for Dr Gray's ten year plan. It has been clear that colleagues and local people are seeking clarity in a short timescale and greater understanding around maternity services delivered in Moray have also shaped the need to undertake this work in comparatively short timescales.

**The Strategic Plan for Dr Gray's Hospital (2023-2033)** was approved at the NHS Grampian Board Meeting on 2nd February 2023. A further paper on the hospital's strategic role is expected to be reviewed in Spring 2023.

As part of the initial engagement work around Dr Gray's Plan for the Future, a survey was distributed to staff, patients and visitors to the hospital in June 2022.

## Who completed the survey? - 107 Responses

June 2022



## Some powerful feedback responses received relating to Dr Gray's Hospital Maternity Services were:

"I valued being in my community, I felt safe and I felt supported. My journey home with my daughter was less than 5 minutes. As a single parent I drove myself to and from hospital. This is unfortunately no longer possible."

"With the local community growing every day, new houses being built, RAF Lossiemouth Expanding etc., we really do need DGH to be fully operational and have full maternity and children's care."

"We as a family have decided to not have any more children unless we move closer to a consultant-led unit or until DGH is reinstated."

"I would like to see a sharing of services with Raigmore so we don't have the trek to Aberdeen. Especially when it comes to maternity services."

"The maternity services, the midwives were second to none on my weekly check-ups whilst pregnant, it's just a shame that most women (including myself) are too scared to opt for their local hospital, and would rather travel 2 hours in labour due to the reduction in facilities."

"Extended Maternity Unit, more operation theatres to go in line with the expansion of Elgin and Moray. Working more with Inverness and Aberdeen hospitals."

"Great hospital for the residents of Elgin, the maternity unit is amazing but needs consultants back so more birthing options are available."

"More services delivered locally, especially things that are regularly required such as maternity services. Look at what clinics could be hosted in Dr Gray's on a regular basis, rather than travel to Aberdeen. I.e. a 1 x per week Tongue Tie Clinic. This would encourage staff development and save families travelling."

## Recurring Themes

The three main recurring themes that repeat throughout discussions and feedback are:



## Next Steps

At the time of this report's publication, NHS Grampian await sign off from the Scottish Government of the **Moray Maternity Service Plan (model 6)**, the plan setting out milestones and timescales for the return to a consultant-led maternity unit.

As we prepare to move towards delivery of this plan, engagement, listening and collaborative working with partners remains a key focus to ensure this long awaited and much needed service is delivered with and for the community of Moray.

There will be a phased approach to implementation of the plan with short, medium and longer term milestones. Improvements will be rolled out over the next 3 years in collaboration with service users and partners as we make the journey towards a new Maternity Service Model at Dr Gray's Hospital.

Communication and engagement will continue via the Maternity Voices Partnership, ad hoc meetings, staff engagement sessions, short life working groups to take forward collaborative project work and continued social media and newsletter updates.

To stay informed of future engagement activity visit [www.nhsgrampian.org/work-with-us/get-involved/](http://www.nhsgrampian.org/work-with-us/get-involved/)



Lauren Tweedley (NHS Grampian Projects Engagement Manager) and Jayne Forrest (Baird Family Hospital Project Midwife) Moray & Banff Maternity Voices Partnership meeting, Moray College, November 2022.

## Summary

Through analysis of the engagement and feedback contained within this report, it is clear that the local community's focus is on the delivery of consultant-led services at Dr Gray's Hospital. The current excellent midwife-led unit at Dr Gray's Hospital and Community Midwifery teams across Moray receive very positive feedback. However, to empower more women to feel safe choosing to give birth closer to home, a consultant-led service is required.

The change in maternity services at Dr Gray's Hospital in July 2018, resulting in the temporary withdrawal of consultant-led services, has resulted in; additional stress, worry and anxiety to many women and their partners, children, family and friends during what is naturally already an anxious time. It is apparent that the reintroduction of an obstetric consultant-led maternity service at Dr Gray's Hospital will be beneficial to local families when this is realised.



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Birth in Grampian (@birth\_in\_grampian) • Instagram photos and videos

## Useful Resources

Plan For The Future - Dr Gray's Hospital 2023-2033 ([nhsgrampian.org](https://nhsgrampian.org))

Get Involved – Birth in Grampian ([scot.nhs.uk](https://scot.nhs.uk))

Maternity Unit, Dr Grays, Elgin – Birth in Grampian ([scot.nhs.uk](https://scot.nhs.uk))

Feedback – Birth in Grampian ([scot.nhs.uk](https://scot.nhs.uk))

MorayHealthandCareNews-Issue04.pdf ([nhsgrampian.org](https://nhsgrampian.org))

## Contact Us

[gram.maternityengagement@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.maternityengagement@nhs.scot) or [gram.involve@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.involve@nhs.scot)

**Many thanks to all who contributed to the findings of this report. Your views, suggestions and lived experience are critical to our understanding of your community's needs. We look forward to continuing this journey with you!**



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