

EARLY PREGNANCY ASSESSMENT UNIT (EPAU)

Barking & Dagenham Health Scrutiny
Committee

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Kathryn Halford OBE
Chief Nurse

Kathryn Tompsett
Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist

EARLY PREGNANCY ASSESSMENT UNIT (EPAU)

- Pregnancy can be an exciting yet sometimes worrying time, and it's crucial we offer the right support to women from the very beginning
- Based at Queen's Hospital, EPAU is a predominantly nurse-led service for women up to 12 weeks pregnant
- We provide specialist consultant care for women who have more complex needs such as ectopic pregnancies and recurrent miscarriages
- We're seeing more women with complex needs in recent months, including an increased amount of caesarean scar ectopic pregnancies
- On average we see around 50 patients each day
- In 2022 we saw 5,798 patients and averaged 500 to 600 scans per month



ACCESS TO SERVICES

- Co-located alongside EPAU on Sunrise B is our Emergency Gynaecology Unit (EGU)
- EPAU is open seven days a week, 9am to 4.30pm; EGU is open 24 hours, seven days a week
- EGU is a gynaecology 'A&E' – it's a walk-in service for women with any gynaecological issue, and supports women up to 24 weeks pregnant who need emergency help
- EPAU is a referral only service. Women can be referred from EGU or their GP
- We have recently introduced a self-referral system to improve our women's experience, for example, they no longer need to wait for a long time in EGU
- The overwhelming majority of women are treated as outpatients for follow up scans, treatments and appointments offered
- However there are women who may need to be admitted eg for very heavy bleeding or surgery – these referrals are done through the EPAU team



CARE AND SUPPORT FOR WOMEN WHO MISCARRY

2020/21		
Miscarriages	Repeat miscarriages	Percentage
649	66	10.2%

2021/22		
Miscarriages	Repeat miscarriages	Percentage
648	62	9.6%

2022/23		
Miscarriages	Repeat miscarriages	Percentage
476	48	10.1%



SUPPORTING WOMEN WHO HAVE EARLY MISCARRIAGES

- We offer reassurance scans every two weeks to women who have had a miscarriage in the past
- Our dedicated bereavement midwife offers training and education to staff and to women who are dealing with a bereavement
- Following delays due to Covid, we are working on plans to introduce a quiet room, to provide a more suitable environment for breaking bad news
- Women are signposted to counselling services for additional support



DECREASING THE RISK OF REPEAT MISCARRIAGES

- Women identified as being at risk of another miscarriage are advised to come for an early scan during their next pregnancy
- They are given personalised health advice, for example, stopping smoking or managing conditions such as diabetes as well as possible; alongside they are given a range of helpful general and specific information leaflets
- Women who suffer from reoccurring miscarriages are referred to the recurrent miscarriage unit to investigate any treatable cause of their miscarriage
- Medication is prescribed where appropriate



ADDRESSING PATIENT FEEDBACK

- It's important we celebrate the positive comments we receive for our EPAU, such as patients feeling comfortable to ask questions, and staff creating a welcoming environment
- However we know there are areas where we can do better, for example, communication with patients and reducing waiting times which are two recurrent themes of complaints
- We have a bereavement midwife who is providing communication skills training for our nurses so they are better equipped to support women during difficult times
- We're also improving waiting times by offering a self-referral pathway
- Women complete a self-referral form, which is reviewed by a doctor before they come in for their appointment, so they have less of a wait. It also reduces waiting times as they don't need to go via EGU
- In February, we launched a new patient survey for women using EPAU
- Having this direct feedback will help us to address issues more quickly and identify any recurring themes

