

FOI REF: 26/578

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Kings Drive
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 2UD

19th September 2026

Tel: 0300 131 4500
Website: www.esht.nhs.uk

Further to your recent request for information made under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000, I now set out our answers to your specific questions, and any clarifications sought and provided, as follows:

For the period 1 April 2020 to the date of this request, please provide the following:

- 1) A list of all maternity units operated by the Trust during this period, by site/hospital name, and their classification (obstetric-led/consultant-led unit, midwife-led unit — alongside or freestanding/standalone) at the start and end of the period.**

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) has two Maternity Units across two sites:

Consultant-led unit - Conquest Hospital, Hastings.

Standalone midwifery-led unit - Eastbourne District General Hospital.

- 2) For any maternity unit that has permanently closed, been downgraded (for example from obstetric-led to midwife-led status), suspended indefinitely, or otherwise had its status changed during this period: the site name, the nature of the change, the date it took (or is due to take) effect, and the reason recorded for the change.**

Eastbourne Midwifery-Led unit changed its model in September 2024 following a period of temporary long-term suspension. The model changed from a staffed model (staff roster shifts to work in the unit) to an on-call model (Unit staffed through on-calls, called to the unit when required for labour and births). This change was a result of staffing challenges and high volume of temporary suspensions leading up to the long-term closure and review of services.

- 3) The number of occasions on which each maternity unit was temporarily closed to new admissions (including where the Trust declared itself unable to accept new admissions, or diverted admissions to another site), broken down by unit and by calendar or financial year.

Year	Conquest CLU	Eastbourne MLU
2020-21	0	2
2021-22	0	3
2022-23	0	17
2023-24	0	30
2024-25	0	1 ongoing from previous year above
2025-26	0	34

- 4) For each temporary closure identified in response to question 3: the date, the duration (in hours), and the reason recorded (for example staffing shortages, capacity, or safety concerns).

Please see the attached document - 'EMU suspensions 2020-2026', for a record of suspension of maternity services at Eastbourne District General Hospital; and note that the blank spaces are due to gaps in data.

I trust this information is helpful in its detail or explanation however, if you are dissatisfied with the response, then you have the right to request an internal review. If you wish to seek an internal review, please write to the Freedom of Information Team at esh-tr.foi@nhs.net quoting the above FOI reference number, within 40 working days. Please note the Trust is not obliged to accept a request for an internal review after this time period.

Yours faithfully

Freedom of Information (FOI) Team
East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
0300 131 4716
Core Hours of Business: Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm

FY 2020-21

Suspension Period	Duration	Reason
28 Mar 2020 - 6 Jul 2020	101 days	Covid-19 pandemic, birth services suspended, outpatient relocation
2 Jan 2021 - 8 Feb 2021	35 days	Covid-19 pandemic and SECamb concerns

Total: 136 days

FY 2021-22

Suspension Period	Duration	Reason
7 Aug 2021 - 20 Sept 2021	42 days	Staffing pressures during pandemic and summer leave
27 Nov 2021 - 29 Nov 2021	2 days	Staffing levels
10 Dec 2021 - 31 Mar 2022	112 days	Second wave of pandemic

Total: 156 days

FY 2022-23

Suspension Episodes	Duration	Reason
1 Apr 2022 - 26 Apr 2022	25 days	Continuing Covid-19 / staffing challenges
28 May - 30 May 2022	2 days	Staffing challenges at acute site
2 Jul - 3 Jul 2022	1 day	Acute site staffing
10 Jul - 12 Jul 2022	2 days	Acute site staffing
15 Jul - 16 Jul 2022	1 day	Acute site staffing
27 Aug - 28 Aug 2022	1 day	Acute site staffing
10 Sept - 11 Sept 2022	1 day	Acute site staffing
16 Sept - 17 Sept 2022	1 day	Acute site staffing
29 Oct - 30 Oct 2022	1 day	Acute site staffing
9 Dec - 11 Dec 2022	2 days	SECamb unable to guarantee Cat 1 response and staffing pressures
12 Dec - 13 Dec 2022	1 day	Acute site staffing
14 Dec - 15 Dec 2022	1 day	Acute site staffing
16 Dec - 17 Dec 2022	1 day	Acute site staffing

20 Dec 2022 - 8 Jan 2023	17 days	SECamb strike and staffing pressures
5 Feb 2023 17:00 - 7 Feb 2023 14:00	~45 hours	SECamb strike
19 Feb 2023 19:00 - 21 Feb 2023 14:00	~43 hours	Acute site staffing
10 Mar 2023 15:00 - 11 Mar 2023 07:30	~16.5 hours	Only 1 midwife, no MSW
14 Mar 2023 19:00 - 15 Mar 2023 19:30	~24.5 hours	Acute site staffing

Total: 62 days

FY 2023-24

FY 2023-24 EMU Suspensions

Suspension Period	Duration	Reason
5 Apr 2023 17:00 - 6 Apr 2023 07:30	1 day	Staffing at acute unit
8 Apr 2023 17:00 - 9 Apr 2023 07:30	1 day	EMU midwife sickness
17 Jul 2023 17:00 - 18 Jul 2023 07:30	1 day	EMU midwife sickness
20 Jul 2023 17:00 - 21 Jul 2023 07:30	1 day	EMU midwife sickness
5 Aug 2023 23:30 - 6 Aug 2023 07:30	Overnight	Acuity at acute unit
15 Aug 2023 17:00 - 16 Aug 2023 07:30	Overnight	EMU midwife sickness
26 Aug 2023 17:00 - 27 Aug 2023 07:30	Overnight	Acute unit staffing and reduced on-call cover
29 Aug 2023 10:00 - 29 Aug 2023 19:15	Daytime	Acute unit staffing
1 Sept 2023 17:00 - 4 Sept 2023 07:30	3 days	Acute unit staffing
9 Sept 2023 17:00 - 11 Sept 2023 07:30	3 days	Acute unit staffing and acuity
11 Sept 2023 17:00 - 12 Sept 2023 07:30	1 day	Not specified in record
13 Sept 2023 09:30 - 17 Sept 2023 07:30	4 days	Acute unit staffing and acuity

18 Sept 2023 17:00 - 19 Sept 2023 07:30	1 day	EMU midwife sickness
23 Sept 2023 13:00 - 26 Sept 2023 07:30	3 days	Acute unit staffing; EMU midwife sickness on 25/09/23
27 Sept 2023 09:30 - 28 Sept 2023 07:30	Overnight	Acute unit staffing / EMU midwife sickness
28 Sept 2023 09:30 - 1 Oct 2023 07:30	Overnight	Acute unit staffing
1 Oct 2023 17:00 - 3 Oct 2023 07:30	2 days	EMU and CQ sickness/staffing pressures
8 Oct 2023 17:00 - 12 Oct 2023 07:30	4 days	EMU sickness / CQ staffing pressures
14 Oct 2023 07:30 - 15 Oct 2023 07:30	1 day	EMU sickness / CQ staffing pressures
19 Oct 2023 09:30 - 20 Oct 2023 07:30	2 days	EMU sickness
21 Oct 2023 07:30 - 22 Oct 2023 07:30	1 day	EMU staffing
26 Oct 2023 17:00 - 27 Oct 2023 07:30	Overnight	EMU staffing
28 Oct 2023 07:30 - 29 Oct 2023 07:30	2 days	EMU staffing
1 Nov 2023 (night only)	0.5 day	Weather event
7 Nov 2023 07:30 - 19:15	0.5 day	EMU sickness
9 Nov 2023 09:00 - 19:15	0.5 day	EMU sickness
11 Nov 2023 14:00 - 12 Nov 2023 07:15	0.5 day	Acute unit staffing
15 Nov 2023 09:30 - 16 Nov 2023 07:15	1 day	EMU sickness
3 Dec 2023 14:00 - 4 Dec 2023 07:15	0.5 day	EMU staffing, no MSW available
7 Dec 2023 09:30 - 8 Dec 2023 07:15	0.5 day	Acute unit staffing
14 Dec 2023 09:30 - 16 Dec 2023 07:30	2 days	Acute unit staffing
18 Dec 2023 08:00 - 31 March 2024	132 days	Long-term suspension to support community team; EMU staff redeployed to community and Conquest services

FY 2024-25

Suspension Period	Duration	Reason
1 st Apr 2024 – 2 nd Sept 2024	Long-term suspension	EMU long-term suspension recorded on worksheet

FY 2025-26 EMU Suspensions

Suspension Period	Duration	Reason / Impact
5 Dec 2025 07:00 - 6 Dec 2025 07:00	24 hrs	
15 Dec 2025 20:00 - 16 Dec 2025 07:15	Overnight	
19 Dec 2025 22:00 - 21 Dec 2025 07:15	33 hrs	
22 Dec 2025 14:00 - 23 Dec 2025 07:15	17 hrs	
23 Dec 2025 18:30 - 24 Dec 2025 02:45	8 hrs	
20 Dec 2025 19:00 - 21 Dec 2025 08:00	13 hrs	
24 Dec 2025 14:00 - 24 Dec 2025 19:15	5 hrs	
6 Jan 2026 08:00 - 7 Jan 2026 08:00	24 hrs	Power failure at EMU.
8 Jan 2026 08:00 - (same day)	Short closure	Power checks at EMU
14 Jan 2026 22:35 - 15 Jan 2026 07:15	Overnight	
23 Jan 2026 18:11	Partial shift	
24 Jan 2026 19:15 - 25 Jan 2026 07:15	Overnight	
28 Jan 2026 17:30 - 29 Jan 2026 07:15	Overnight	
30 Jan 2026 16:00 - 30 Jan 2026 19:15	3 hrs	
3 Feb 2026 01:00- 3 Feb 2026 07:15	Partial shift	
7 Feb 2026 08:00 - 8 Feb 2026 08:00	24 hrs	
9 Feb 2026 20:00	Partial shift	
14 Feb 2026 09:45 - 14 Feb 2026 12:45	3 hrs	
15 Feb 2026 19:05 - 16 Feb 2026 07:00	Overnight	
17 Feb 2026 13:00	Partial shift	
18 Feb 2026 14:35	Partial shift	
19 Feb 2026 07:30	Partial shift	
20 Feb 2026 09:22	Partial shift	
21 Feb 2026 14:00	Partial shift	
23 Feb 2026 22:15 - 24 Feb 2026 07:15	Overnight	
3 Mar 2026 03:00	Partial shift	
5 Mar 2026 09:00	Partial shift	
5 Mar 2026 20:30	Partial shift	

9 Mar 2026 15:15	Partial shift	
14 Mar 2026 19:15 - 15 Mar 2026 07:15	Overnight	
18 Mar 2026 19:15 - 19 Mar 2026 07:15	Overnight	
27 Mar 2026 03:45	Partial shift	
24 Mar 2026 03:00 - 25 Mar 2026 07:15	Overnight	
27 Mar 2026 01:00 - 27 Mar 2026 07:15	Overnight	