



Maternity and Neonatal Matters

Summary report of Maternity and Neonatal Enter and View programme



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Glossary

LMNS – Local Maternity and Neonatal System

ICB – Integrated Care Board

HWT – Healthwatch Together

BTH – Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

ELHT – East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

LTHTR – Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

UHMBT – University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

PALS – Patient Advice and Liaison Service

MNVP – Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership

Introduction

About Healthwatch Together

Healthwatch was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 as an independent consumer champion to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

There are over 150 local Healthwatch across England. The role of a local Healthwatch is to:

- Listen to people, especially those who are most vulnerable, to understand their experiences and what matters most to them
- Influence those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and into the future
- Empower and inform people to get the most from their health and social care services and encourage other organisations to do the same

Healthwatch Together (HWT) is the collaboration of five Healthwatch across the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS). HWT works in partnership to effectively operate over the whole footprint and consists of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen, Healthwatch Blackpool, Healthwatch Cumberland, Healthwatch Lancashire, and Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness. Each Healthwatch organisation works in their own local authority area and is their own unique entity, providing a local approach to community engagement.

What is Enter and View?

Healthwatch have a power under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to carry out Enter and View visits. An Enter and View visit is a legal power in which Healthwatch can enter health and social care services to see them in action. It enables Healthwatch to identify what is working well with services and where they could be improved.

Healthwatch Together conducted Enter and View visits at maternity services across Lancashire and South Cumbria and spoke to patients and relatives using the service at the time, gained insight directly from staff and conducted observations of the environment.

Individual reports have been written for each service identifying aspects of good practice as well as recommendations or highlighted areas for improvements. These reports have been sent to service providers for their response and each individual report has been published on each Healthwatch website.

Enter and View reports are available to members of the public along with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations. Where appropriate, Healthwatch may arrange a revisit to monitor the progress of improvements and celebrate any further successes.

Methodology

During March 2024, Healthwatch Together conducted a series of Enter and View visits at maternity units, focussing on antenatal clinics and birth centres, across Lancashire and South Cumbria. The aim was to gather feedback from individuals and partners/relatives using the service, as well as staff working at the service. Observations were also conducted of the environment and staff-patient interactions.

In total, 11 Enter and View visits were conducted.

Service	Date of visit	Healthwatch
Maternity Unit Ward D, Blackpool Victoria Hospital	6 th March 2024	Blackpool
	18 th March 2024	
Fylde Coast Birth Centre	6 th March 2024	Blackpool
	3 rd April 2024	
Blackburn Birthing Centre	22 nd March 2024	Blackburn with Darwen
Antenatal Ward and Clinic, Lancashire Mother and Newborn Centre, Burnley General Hospital	28 th March 2024	Blackburn with Darwen
Rosendale Birth Centre	22 nd March 2024	Blackburn with Darwen
Chorley Birth Centre	21 st March 2024	Lancashire
Preston Birth Centre	20 th March 2024	Lancashire
Sharoe Green Antenatal Clinic	21 st March 2024	Lancashire
Maternity Unit, Royal Lancaster Infirmary	18 th March 2024	Lancashire
South Lakes Birth Centre	14 th March 2024	Westmorland and Furness
Helme Chase, Westmorland General Hospital	4 th March 2024	Westmorland and Furness

Feedback gathered from 154 people



78 patients

21 relatives

55 staff

Patients were asked the following questions:

1. Please describe your experience here so far
2. Have you received information you need in a way that is easy for you to understand?
3. Have you felt informed in any decisions about your care?
4. Do you have a birthing plan in place?
5. Have you felt that your physical and mental wellbeing have been supported? If not, why?
6. Do you know who you can contact if you need any additional support or information?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share about the care you have received throughout your pregnancy journey?

Relatives were also asked about their experience of the service as well as their view on the facilities, whether they felt informed in their partners/relatives care and the support they had received as a relative/partner.

Staff were asked how satisfied they were with their role as well as whether they felt supported to carry out person-centred care, if staffing levels met patient needs, areas that are working well as well as any changes which could be made to improve patient experience.

Observations were also made during the visit of both the environment and staff-patient interactions. Observations of the environment included looking at building access and signage, cleanliness, waiting rooms/seating areas, toilet facilities, hygiene measures and BSL support and hearing loops.

This report is a summary of the findings collected across the 11 Enter and View visits conducted by Healthwatch Together. Areas to celebrate and recommendations/areas for improvement which apply to all services within Lancashire and South Cumbria maternity/neonatal services are detailed within this report. More detailed information about individual visits can be found in their respective reports.

Areas to celebrate

Overall, feedback from patients and relatives highlighted examples of receiving great person-centred care, support and information. The following areas were highlighted as working well and should be celebrated.

Environment and facilities

All services visited were observed to be clean and welcoming. This was observed by HWT staff and praised by patients. Environments were calm and relaxing, which enhanced the patient experience. In Birth Centres particularly, there were decorations, motivational quotes and fairy lights which added to the relaxing feel as opposed to a clinical environment. Some Birth centres had garden access which was also praised, particularly by partners and relatives.

Staff



Staff were praised throughout the visit for their friendliness, support and keeping patients and partners/relatives informed in their care. Positive feedback about staff was received from both patients and relatives, as well as HWT staff observing positive staff-patient interactions.

“Communication has been good, and the midwives are always welcoming. I feel like you can talk about anything with any of them.” – Rossendale Birth Centre, ELHT.

“Although I’ve been through some hellish times I want to commend my treatment. The nurses – everybody – they’ve been great.” – South Lakes Birth Centre, UHMBT.

Staff satisfaction

Overall, staff satisfaction was high with staff sharing that they are supported to provide person-centred care to patients. Feedback also indicated a strong sense of teamwork which contributed to staff satisfaction. Staff satisfaction was particularly high for East Lancashire Hospital Trust.

“Yes, I have a brilliant manager. We are a good team, we work well together. No matter what band you are.” – Blackburn Birth Centre, ELHT.

Patient satisfaction

Across all hospital trusts, patient feedback indicated that the majority of patients were kept informed, felt supported and had access to information that was easy to understand. Most patients had produced a birth plan and had a point of contact should they have any enquiries or concerns.

“The whole time that I have been here I have felt safe and comfortable, the staff cannot do enough for you. The environment to give birth has been great” – Chorley Birth Centre, LTHTR.

“Absolutely great, I didn’t think they would inform you as much as they do, the midwife during labour was there all the time and built a connection with me, explained every little bit of what was happening. Both me and my child have been really well cared for.” – Fylde Coast Birth Centre, BTH.

Recommendations

Each Enter and View visit included a series of recommendations or areas for improvement. Some recommendations were specific to the environment or facilities, however, there were similar recommendations made across all or most services across Lancashire and South Cumbria. The following recommendations apply to all hospital trusts for the attention of the Lancashire and South Cumbria Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) and Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB).

Update noticeboards

The most common recommendation, which was made for 9 (82%) services was to improve/update noticeboards containing information and support. This includes ensuring that there is information about PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service), MNVP (Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership) and the local Healthwatch for their area. This would ensure that patients and relatives have clear information and advice if they would like to share their experience, feedback or concerns about using the service.



Improve signage

Another recommendation which applied to 7 (64%) of the services visited was to improve signage within the facility. This included clear signage to different areas of the facility particularly in car parking areas to the entrance and within the facility to reception areas. This signage should also be accessible to those who are visually impaired.

Staffing levels

The main concern raised by staff across all hospital trusts was low staffing levels. Although staff still felt they could deliver person-centred care, staff mentioned how low staffing levels can lead to burnout and stress.

In addition, staff from LTHTR raised their concerns about the staffing arrangements for Chorley Birth Centre as due to frequent low staffing levels, this often means staff working at Royal Preston Hospital are transferred to Chorley Birth Centre, or if staff are not transferred to the Birth Centre it may be closed, which limits patient choice of where they give birth. Although these arrangements are in place to ensure patient safety, staff shared concerns including a reluctance of some staff to transfer units, low staffing levels affecting patient safety and stress of staff.

“Midwives don’t like coming here because they feel isolated. I feel that this is becoming a norm and people are reluctant to move between settings.” – Chorley Birth Centre, LTHTR.

“No, I feel that if the birth centre was staffed more, women may feel more inclined to choose to birth here.” – Rossendale Birth Centre, ELHT.

Badger Notes App

Please note: Badger Notes is an electronic system/app used for maternity and neonatal records which is updated with information from midwives and other health professionals involved in a patients care.

Feedback was mixed regarding the Badger Notes App to provide information to patients. Negative comments about the Badger Notes app were received in the majority of the Enter and View visits. Although some patients found it easy and convenient to use, some found it inaccessible and difficult to use. Comments were received about information not being updated, particularly regarding their medical records, and some individuals would prefer to receive paper notes and correspondence rather than using the app.

“Yes, though the Badger notes app is a nightmare. On the appointments section for when I come here, it says outpatients which is in a different part of the building. I can’t tell from looking at the appointments list which ones are important that I’d want my partner to come along to. It also kicks you out every 5 minutes.”– Rossendale Birth Centre, ELHT.

“The Badger notes app is a bit annoying I have to log in again and have to start all over again. Did prefer paper notes.” – Sharoe Green Antenatal Clinic, LTHTR.

Conclusion

Healthwatch Together conducted 11 Enter and View visits at maternity services across Lancashire and South Cumbria to gather feedback from patients and relatives/partners using the service. Staff feedback was also received as well as observations recorded of the environment.

The environment and facilities within each service were observed to be welcoming and clean. Patient and relative feedback was also positive about the environment.

There were examples of great working practice, with staff providing person-centred care and patients and relatives feeling supported and informed in their care. The majority of staff were satisfied in their role and shared that staff team were supportive with a strong sense of teamwork.

However, there were also areas for improvement identified which apply to all services visited. Noticeboards were often out of date or lacking important information which required updating, and signage within the services could be improved to ensure patients know where they need to go.

The frequency of low staffing levels was highlighted by staff which can cause some staff to feel stressed and burnt out. The Badger Notes app was also highlighted as an area for improvement as patient feedback revealed that the app is not always up to date with information and was inaccessible to some patients.



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