



Healthwatch
Together

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool,
Cumberland, Lancashire and Westmorland
and Furness working in partnership

Maternity and Neonatal Matters

Engagement roadshow findings for East Lancashire
Hospitals NHS Trust Maternity and Neonatal services



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Introduction

In 2016, The National Maternity Review, 'Better Births' was published establishing a clear vision for maternity and neonatal services across England to become safer, more personalised, kinder, professional and family friendly. The review states that every woman should have access to information to enable her to make decisions about her care and support for individualised needs and circumstances.

Healthwatch Together delivered a robust engagement project to investigate the experiences of women and families who access maternity and neonatal services within Lancashire and South Cumbria, and whether people feel they have choice and personalisation in their care.

The findings of this engagement project have been shared with the Lancashire and South Cumbria Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS), part of the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), whose role is to ensure that national guidance for maternity and neonatal care are implemented across services delivered in Lancashire and South Cumbria. This influences improvements in the safety, quality, and experience of maternity and neonatal care. Our findings will inform future LMNS workplans and formulate targeted interventions to improve service delivery.

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.

Methodology

During March 2024, Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen conducted an engagement roadshow to hear from women and families about their experiences of maternity and neonatal services. An online survey was set up and questions were formulated to understand what matters most to individuals within maternity and neonatal services, whether they felt they had a choice in the care they received and whether they received a personalised care plan.

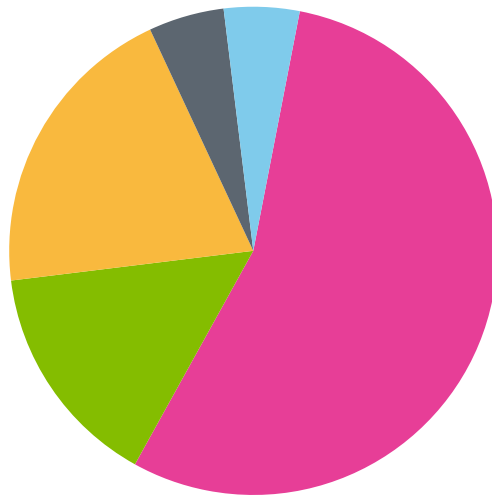
As well as the online survey, Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen also attended a range of community groups and family hubs to collect feedback and experiences. Case studies were also collected from those who wanted to tell their story in more detail. The below table shows the engagement attended:

Group attended	Area
Little Harwood family Hub - Little moments together	Blackburn
Livesey Family Hub - Baby & You	Blackburn
Audley Childrens Centre- Little moments together	Blackburn
Higher Croft Childrens centre - Baby play	Blackburn
Shadsworth Family Hub - Baby & you	Blackburn
Darwen Family Hub - Baby & You	Darwen
Tay Street Family Hub -Chat Play Read	Burnley
Maden Family Hub - Baby & You	Bacup, Rossendale
Haslingden Hub - Mini move and groove	Haslingden, Rossendale
Copper House Children Centre - Baby and You	Rishton, Hyndburn

We received feedback from **82** people. Feedback received gave an insight into maternity and neonatal experiences, as well as highlighting good practice and areas for improvements within maternity and neonatal services.

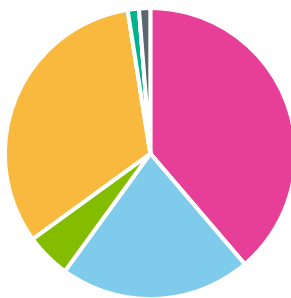
Demographics

How would you describe your ethnicity?



- White - British
- Asian or Asian British - Indian
- Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
- Mixed / Multiple - White and Black Caribbean
- Other (please specify)

What is your employment status?



- Employed - Full time
- Self - Employed
- In full time education
- Disable or unable to work
- Employed - Part time
- Unemployed
- I am a carer
- Prefer not to say

Age	Number of respondents
Under 18	0
18-24	8
25-34	57
35-44	17

Findings

Before, during and after your pregnancy- what matters most to you?

Midwife appointments



As shown on the word cloud above, the most common responses we received were -**Baby**, **Healthy** and **Support**.

28 of the responses focused on '**Healthy Baby**' with some of the responses we received below:

"Making sure the health of my baby is looked after"

"Just that my baby is healthy, and I have a safe delivery"

"Baby's health"

"Eating healthy so my baby is healthy".

"Having a healthy baby, someone there to ask questions, reassurance that my baby is safe".

20 responses included the word 'support'. It was used widely throughout our engagement which included mental health support, breastfeeding support, support from family and partners, group support, midwife support and support for complex needs.

"I feel having good mental health supports me with everything."

"Help and support with my mental health".

"Breastfeeding support, longer midwife sessions."

"Having family support".

"Support from midwives who understand how I am feeling."

"Having family support."



14 women said having the same midwife and continuity of care was important to them.

“Seeing the same midwife”.

“Consistency in seeing the same midwife or few midwives and being able to build up trust.”

“Having check-ups regularly, I preferred it when I saw the same midwife because I didn't like having to explain my pregnancy complications every time and the Badger app wasn't fully updated straight away.”

“Personalised care, seeing the same midwife/team.”

Women also informed us on the importance of support for additional needs during pregnancy:

“Help with additional services for example bereavement services which I needed during my pregnancy after the loss of my grandmother who I cared for. There was no bereavement counselling available.”

Did you receive any support and information before you were pregnant about pregnancy and planning? If yes, who/where did you receive this information from?

Did you receive any support and information before you were pregnant about pregnancy & planning?



65 women said they did not receive support and information before they were pregnant.

The remaining 17 women had been informed about pregnancy and planning.

“Fertility clinic and the early pregnancy unit at Burnley Hospital”

“I had a miscarriage, so they gave me all the information I needed”.

Others said they received information from their GP, internet, asking family and friends.

During your pregnancy, did you and your partner (if applicable) receive all the information you needed in a way that was easy for you to understand?

71 women felt they received information in a way that was easy for them to understand. Others felt it would be beneficial for midwife appointments to be longer so that they had time to ask questions. Women wanted antenatal classes whilst pregnant as they felt this was an opportunity to gain information about pregnancy and birth, unfortunately this was not offered throughout East Lancashire.

"Appointments too short"

"I was only 20, I felt like I didn't really understand what the information meant".

"Didn't really receive any information really".

"No antenatal classes offered".

"Wanted an antenatal group but there was none available".

"I did a lot of my own research i wanted to know everything!"

"No, I have previous children, so I didn't need to."



Were you and your partner (if applicable) provided with a point of contact if you had any questions throughout your pregnancy? If no, did you know who/where you could contact if you had any questions?

Most women were given a point of contact if they had any questions. This was a list of contact numbers for each of the Birth centres within East Lancashire which can be found on the Badger notes app. Women felt confident they had contact numbers, but this also came with some confusion on which number to call.

"I had access to the numbers but the telephone and contact system is too complicated, I had difficulty working out who to contact and when".

"Told me to contact the birth centre. With my eldest two children I had the mobile number for my midwife who I could contact anytime. I didn't like not having that option this time".

"I was told to ring Burnley Birth centre if I had any questions. I would have liked having a dedicated midwife, my friends who had babies 3 years ago had that."

"I don't even know who my midwife is this pregnancy, the last time I was pregnant I had a designated mobile number for her."

"Just the general midwife telephone number"

"yes, we were provided with contact details for our local midwife which was brilliant as last time i had community based midwife and this wasn't good"

Most women wanted a dedicated midwife to contact, someone who knew them and understood their needs. It was clear that women had experienced this support in previous pregnancies with elder children. Women are noticing the difference in the level of support in their current pregnancies.

Did you and your partner (if applicable) feel informed in any decisions that were made?

Overall, women felt informed about decisions that were made. They were happy with the care they have received from midwives and felt they were always informed, involved and listened to.

“Yes, I wanted a water birth and they made sure that's what got”.

“Yes, I went to the birth centre once as I was worried about reduced movements, they looked after me really well and reassured me, I felt listened to.”

“Yes, fully informed and listened to”.

“Yes all the time- they were helpful”

Only 8 women out of 75 respondents did not feel informed or listened to.

“They wanted to test me for gestational diabetes, I didn't want to be tested. I feel like I wasn't listened to and they didn't give me a good enough reason of why would have gestational diabetes”

“I feel like I need more advice about what I should do, they have told me that I will probably need a C section as my baby has only got one kidney but I feel like I need more information/guidance to make the right choice.”

“Sometimes. There were occasions during the late pregnancy / early labour that we felt we had to speak up”

Were you offered a choice about where you preferred to give birth? If you didn't give birth at your preferred location, was it explained to you the reasons for this?

Women were always given a choice of where they would prefer to give birth. Some women couldn't have a choice due to complications or the need for close monitoring. From the feedback, women were still satisfied with the care they received.

Personal stories



“Yes but no! I went to Rossendale birthing centre and got in the pool but after 20 minutes they realised it wasn't a straightforward birth, so I ended up having to go to Burnley. I still got what I wanted though with a pool birth in the birthing suite, and they really looked after both me and my husband.”



"I was offered Rossendale birthing centre, but I ended up having a C-section so had to go to Burnley which was fine and best for what I needed."

"I don't have a choice, I have to go to Burnley as I am classed as high risk"

"No because I needed additional interventions, so I needed to be consultant led in Burnley."

"I would have preferred to go to Blackburn Birth Centre but I ended up having to go to Burnley"

"Yes, explained for health reasons"

"Yes, although I wanted to attend Blackburn Birthing Centre however due to requiring an induction due to small size of baby, I had to attend Burnley."

Women also gave birth at their preferred location -

"Yes - all went to plan!"

"Yes I wanted a home birth and i had a home birth"

"Yes, I wanted to give birth at Burnley and that's were i went"

5 women wanted to give birth at Blackburn Birth Centre but couldn't due to staffing issues.

"No - I wanted to give birth at Blackburn Birth centre but wasn't enough staffing so I had to go to Burnley"

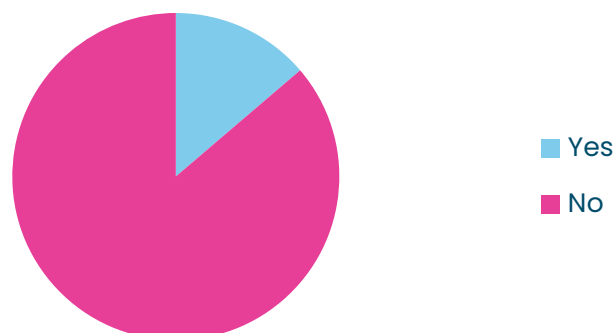
"Yes but they didn't have staff at the birthing centre"

"I had to go to Burnley as Blackburn birth centre was closed due to not having enough staff"

Blackburn Birth centre occasionally closes when Burnley Birth centre is at full capacity and need additional staff to support.

Did you have any additional health needs throughout your pregnancy? (i.e. diabetes, smoking cessation) If yes, were these needs discussed?

Did you have any additional health needs throughout your pregnancy? i.e. diabetes, smoking cessation



70 women didn't have any additional health needs throughout their pregnancy.

12 women did have additional health needs and from their feedback most felt their needs were discussed and supported throughout their pregnancy.

"I have mental health problems so was also under the care of the perinatal MH team."

"Domestic Violence, housing issues and MH problems. I was supported with this."

"Gestational diabetes and High BP"

"Yes I had pre-eclampsia with all 3 births and this time they gave me more responsibility for self-management which I found really positive."

Unfortunately one lady didn't feel supported managing her medication for her ADHD whilst pregnant.

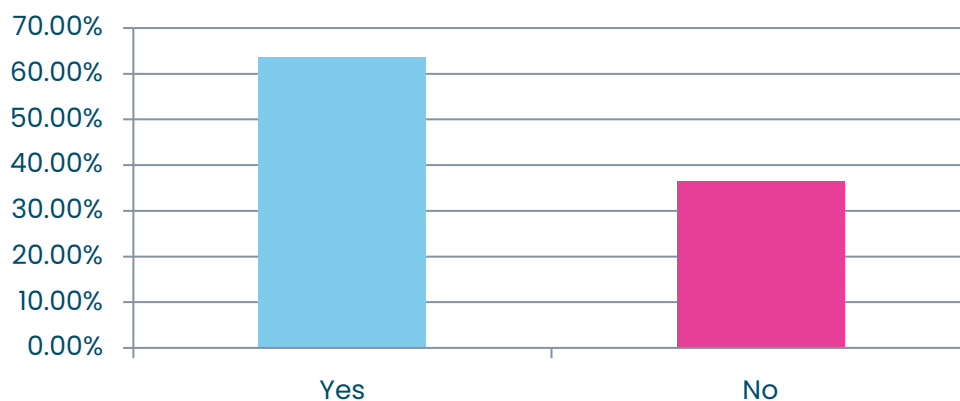
"No - I have ADHD and had to come off my medication when I was pregnant, but no one spoke to me about managing that and I've not been seen since about my medication, they're saying I need another assessment. Pre-eclampsia was discussed with me though."

"I had high blood pressure and was on medication for that but this was very well explained to me by the midwife and she talked me through the process."



Was a personalised care plan discussed with you and your partner (if applicable)?

Was a personalised care plan discussed with you and your partner?



Did you create a care plan that was available to yourself and the team caring for you? If yes, was this updated throughout your pregnancy?

40 women said “yes” they created a care plan, and it was updated and available throughout their pregnancy. We felt from the responses women wasn't sure what a care plan was and what it involved.

We found a useful tool used within other NHS trust [My personalised care plan on-line.pdf \(wypartnership.co.uk\)](http://wypartnership.co.uk). By using this document it enables women to share their preferences, experiences and wishes in one document so this can be shared with health professionals throughout their pregnancy and postnatal care.

“It was updated throughout the pregnancy but did not take into consideration the complications that I was not aware could happen”

“Yes always discussed at appointments”

“They always discussed options”

“Luckily, it was the same throughout the pregnancy no changes needed to be made”

“Yes, and spoken about regularly”

“I didn't want a care plan as I feel “what will be will be”



How would you describe the support that you received?

We received 54 positive responses of the experiences and support they had received. Women felt supported throughout their pregnancy and labour. Some women giving special praise to midwives who have gone above and beyond during their pregnancy and labour.

Personal stories



“The midwife and hospital were good. The midwife was incredible, she kept in touch with me all the time whilst I was in hospital - she didn't need to do that, she went above and beyond. My baby was in NICU for 2 months and they were really good too.”



“Really good - i felt like i was visited often and i always had someone i could ask questions”

“I felt really supported throughout my pregnancy - from my midwife, health visitor and husband”

"It was good. I was treated nicely and looked after"

"Really really good, i can't fault the consultant or midwives."

"Very very good, they were really supportive and kept me informed on the Badger App"



"Really good. First pregnancy really supported me with breastfeeding"

Some women had recently moved into the area and felt the support received was much better in East Lancashire than were they used to live.

"I was initially under the care of Leeds Teaching Hospital during my 1st and 2nd trimester and then moved here during the 3rd. I found the care and support to be much better here and I felt well looked after."

"The care I received in East Lancashire was really good compared to what care you get in Suffolk."

13 responses included mixed views about the support they had received. Unfortunately some women didn't receive the same support as others.

"It was okay but inconsistent"

"During my pregnancy it was great, shortly after the birth at the birth centre an individual senior midwife was quite abrupt and seemed to push her own needs over mine, however everyone else was lovely."

"The support i received from the consultant was very good, I felt the midwife care was average"

"Overall it was good, I felt my midwife wasn't great. I feel like she was a little 'standoffish' and couldn't really speak to her."

"Really good, however when my care was moved over to the Gestational Diabetes team I felt they were very stretched and so the care wasn't as good. They often had trouble fitting me in and i had to have a telephone appt or had to wait there 4 hours to be seen."

"The support was brilliant, my midwife Carla was amazing and supportive however I found that the appointments were too short. The Health Visitor and Breastfeeding support could have been better."

"I didn't really need any support but booking the C-section was easy and I got my preferred date. I did however feel the midwife tried to push breastfeeding (more so than I had ever been pushed) far too much and if I would've been a first time mum it would've been very intimidating"

"Midwife amazing, doctors appalling"

"It was very good, but I did find the midwife at times hard to understand as she spoke to me as if I already knew everything and this was very overwhelming at times as I felt I was unaware of what was happening."

Overall, out of **81** responses only **5** were negative. Themes from these were women feeling alone throughout the pregnancy, not receiving personalised care and women's concerns being dismissed.

"I feel like with this pregnancy I'm going it alone, left to your own devices. I have a phone number to call but nobody ever answers."

"Average - Rubbish really"

"Very poor 2nd time round, I had many complications after the birth which could have been avoided with a scan after the birth. I also phoned Blackburn centre around a week after the birth and expressed my concerns but was told to just take paracetamol, they wouldn't see me. Ended up with a massive bleed out and having to be rushed back to hospital. Checked and sent away from Burnley hospital, 3 days later another massive bleed out, rushed back to hospital and I refused to leave until it was sorted. I was in there for 4 days when I eventually had an operation and was then sent home.

"Didn't feel like it was personalised care"

"Only my family supported me"

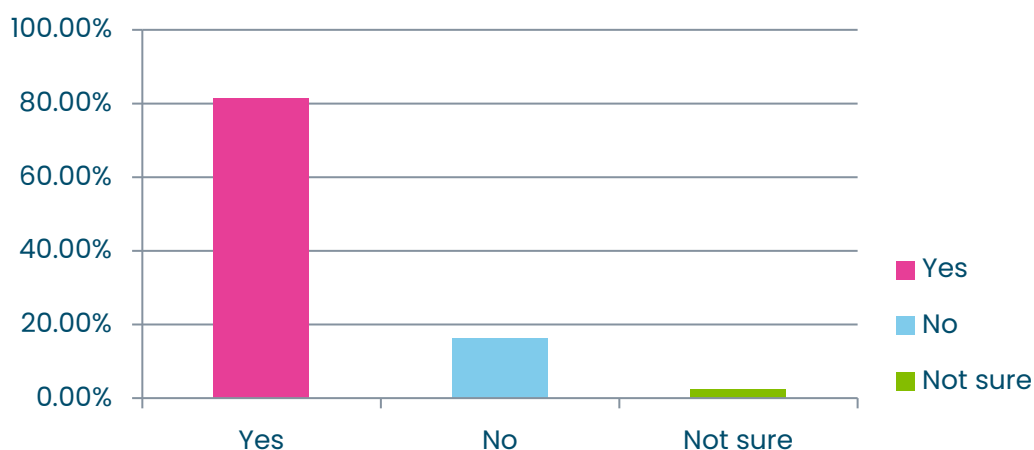
The remaining 9 responses were comments about the lack of aftercare they received after birth.

"Very good during pregnancy and giving birth but I feel the aftercare isn't great. I felt like they stopped coming to check on me and baby suddenly and I didn't have anyone to ask questions if needed."

"Very good during pregnancy, not so good postnatal."

Were you offered a 6-8 week postnatal check by your GP? If yes, did the GP offer support for yourself and your partner, as well as checking your baby?

Were you offered a 6-8 week postnatal check by your GP?



It was positive to see that over 80% had received a 6-8 week postnatal check by their GP. Unfortunately, these appointments were not a pleasant experience for 15 women. Women felt doctors asked questions around mental health as a tick box exercise and wasn't personalised to them and their needs, some leading to

formal complaints to their GP. Some women had to ring their doctors to arrange this appointment themselves and one was told the appointment wasn't needed.

Personal stories



They made me a separate appointment to check on me and the GP said "Are you depressed?" I couldn't believe she had asked me in that manner, it made me question if I was depressed. I didn't know what the symptoms were of being depressed? It was a two minute appointment and then I had to go back 2 hours later for my baby's check. It was all pretty useless to be honest, felt like a waste of time.



"He checked my baby and very briefly checked on my "mood" but didn't go into too much depth."

"The GP checked the baby and did everything thoroughly but my check was poor. I was not listened to and rushed. I came away having not resolved many issues I was experiencing."

"Eventually after phoning multiple times to get the appointment, the receptionist didn't think I needed one. The appointment was pathetic, just asked if I was ok and took my blood pressure."

"Yes but he wasn't a very helpful doctor"

"Asked abruptly if I was depressed. No further questions or follow ups. I put in a formal complaint which was followed up with extra training for the GP"

"They checked my baby but not me or my partner. I received a phone call when my baby was 20 months old saying that i had been missed off the list to check my 3rd degree tear. I've been supported since I've been to this appointment but can't help feel it's a little late for recovery."

"He just checked my baby, I was struggling with an infection they wouldn't see me at this appointment. I had to ring and they gave me medication from a telephone appointment, nobody actually saw me"

"He checked my baby, but asked me random questions about domestic violence - which I didn't feel appropriate."

"I had to ring the doctors and ask for one but they weren't really bothered and I got the appointment around 16 weeks after and it was only a chat."



Is there anything else you would like to share about your maternity and/or neonatal experience?

Women felt they could summarise their experience with this question. We received a vast amount of positive and personalised care experiences, including offering accessibility to patients whose first language wasn't English. It also enabled women to feedback ideas for areas of improvement

Personal stories



The midwives were very supportive throughout. One particular midwife at Blackburn birthing centre was fantastic. I was there for my baby's check-up 4 days postpartum and was not feeling myself. She saw me whilst walking past and came over to ask if I was okay because she felt I looked unwell and upset. She supported me and put me in contact with some fantastic breastfeeding support groups, made me a cup of tea and a biscuit and was really caring. I liked the Badger App in general but the appointment system need to provide notifications.



"Everything was fine, I had to stay in hospital for 5 days after giving birth. I liked it, I felt looked after and supported."

"Not really, everything was good."

"Baby was in NICU after emergency section. Surgery staff were excellent and so were NICU staff"

"I would highly recommend having a baby at the birth centre."

"Yes I'm from Romania and the care was very good, they offered me info in Romanian."

"Brilliant care and info."

"It's always been good."

"my second child was definitely different and much better than my first"

"I had a really positive birth experience at Blackburn birth centre and the whole team was amazing, couldn't thank them enough."

"I felt that they were pushing for me to go to Blackburn Birth Centre and have a natural birth despite me saying I wanted an elective section due to my MH. In the end I got the section but the MH team had to advocate for me."

During our conversations with women it became apparent how important it was for them to see the same midwife throughout their pregnancy. Women often felt dissatisfied with having to re tell their story over and over again, especially if they had gone through complications during their pregnancy.

"I would have having a designated midwife who I could contact during my pregnancy."

"I would have liked to have the same midwife throughout my pregnancy and a birth plan"

"I would have liked better consistency with seeing the same midwife so i didn't have to explain my story so many times."

The negative responses we received were mostly around poor aftercare after giving birth. Women feeling alone to support their baby after birth and lack of physical and wellbeing checks for mothers.

"I felt like after I was discharged the care I received was ridiculous. I was discharged with a broken coccyx and only discovered this through my own research.

"I struggled in the first 6 - 8 months after having my baby with my mental health. I would of like more groups/classes to attend, they really help me."

"The aftercare was terrible, the Health visitor never came round for the first appointment, didn't ring or notify me that she wasn't coming. I didn't see a Health Visitor then until my daughter was 3 years old."

"As i said before, the aftercare needs to be for longer. I feel like you are left to support this baby on your own."

"I would hope the aftercare improves as this was a bad way to end my experience"

"Midwives were amazing, i felt my aftercare wasn't as good I felt as though I was brushed off with my concerns about my tailbone injury from giving birth"

" I would have liked face to face breastfeeding support."

We received some negative feedback around the Badger notes app. Women explained that it was difficult to keep track of appointments. If an appointment was cancelled they wouldn't receive a notification to notify them. They also fed back that the appointments section did not explain what type of appointment each was. This brought uncertainty as to whether they needed their partner to attend the appointment or not.



“Badger notes were ok but if an appointment got cancelled it would only show up the day before so you'd have to keep checking the app.”

“I did not like the Badger notes app. I found it very impersonal. Previously you would go and see the GP when you found out you were expecting, however with the app you are just given the App details and then your 8 week midwife check comes through on that. I found that my results were not updated to the app quickly (e.g. blood results) and things needed to be chased.”

“On the Badger notes app it doesn't tell you what your appointment is, it tells you when and where but doesn't document what the appointment is to check. This needs to be improved in my opinion.”



Conclusion



Overall, most women and partners were happy with the care they received throughout their pregnancies. There was fantastic praise for some midwives across the geography and the Trust should be proud of this feedback.

Women felt informed and involved in decisions made about their care. They were always given a choice of preferred place of birth. Personalised care plans were discussed with women and updated throughout pregnancy, although it became apparent women were not sure what a personalised care plan was until it was explained to them.

It was positive to see that 80% of women had been offered GP 6-8 week postnatal checks, unfortunately women felt the postnatal check was mainly a check for their baby and wasn't offered support for themselves. The women who were offered support felt it wasn't personalised to them and was asked questions which made them feel uncomfortable.

We received mixed views around the Badger notes app, some women were happy with the app and found it useful and easy to use. However, others didn't like the app as they found they weren't notified when appointments were cancelled or amended leading to wasted journeys. There was also lack of information on there about type of appointment and some felt that notes were minimal.

It was evident that women were dissatisfied with postnatal care, with many feeling after giving birth that they were left on their own with minimal support.

Recommendations

1. Midwife appointments should be longer than the current 20 minutes to allow enough time for discussions and to cover all necessary topics.
2. Midwives should educate women on the long list of contact numbers provided, so that they understand which number to call for specific issues or concerns.
3. Women to have a dedicated midwife or a small group of midwives throughout their pregnancy.
4. Now that ELHT have taken over the 0-19 service from April 2024, we would recommend that the Trust uses the feedback from mothers around the postnatal aftercare to shape a more person centred provision.
5. Primary care to provide a more consistent approach in Blackburn with Darwen and East Lancashire to offering a 6-8 week check for both mother and baby and training provided to staff to ensure person centred conversations about the wellbeing of mothers are effective.
6. Badger notes app should be updated to give more detail on the types of appointments booked; notifications should be sent out when an appointment is cancelled and greater space should be provided for notes from midwives for patients.
7. Implement a personalised care plan tool [My personalised care plan online.pdf \(wypartnership.co.uk\)](#) this would enable consistency in quality of care and care plans for women across Blackburn with Darwen and East Lancashire, ensuring that all women feel adequately supported during their pregnancy.



Response from Provider

Dear Sarah Re: Enter and View and engagement reports in respect of Maternity Services at ELHT

We are extremely grateful to the Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen team for their visit to Blackburn Birth Centre, Antenatal Ward, Antenatal Clinic, Rossendale Birth Centre and the engagement roadshow across community groups, family hubs and online across our areas in March 2024. Such meaningful feedback offers us as a maternity and neonatal service great opportunities to ensure we hear the voices of women, families and multi-disciplinary team members, further highlighting areas of good practice to inform any improvements as we strive to continuously provide a high-quality service for all our diverse population.

We are delighted to receive positive feedback across the services involved in the visit. We are proud of reports that our areas are welcoming and bright, our staff are friendly, caring, and supportive towards our women and families and staff morale is generally high with a strong sense of teamwork and support for one-another.

In response to feedback included in the report, we would also like to make the following comments:

- We acknowledge feedback raised by both staff and patients regarding the length of appointments and delays to appointment start times that women and families are experiencing. We can assure our service users that this is under consistent review with a recent demand and capacity exercise to facilitate more appointments with particular reference to our diabetic clinics being undertaken. We commit to continue with such exercises to improve this challenging position in view of high numbers of patients requiring both consultant and midwifery-led care. This challenge is nationally recognised within maternity services, ELHT seek to align to any national guidance to inform local reviews to improve antenatal clinic and community midwifery clinic appointment length and wait times. The next direct focus is a demand and capacity exercise on booking appointments and community clinic appointment times.
- We are pleased to receive positive feedback in general regarding the Badgernotes app being of benefit, easy to use, and providing information in a way that is easy to understand. However, navigating the system for diverse groups one example being non-English speaking is an area we wish to focus on and improve, hence ELHT have designed a step-by-step patient information leaflet to be provided in the top required languages for our demographic, detailing the initial important information every women may need about our services from the point of known pregnancy. We continue to review and optimise the system regularly through our Digital Optimisation Group and the comments made within these reports regarding improvements needed will be addressed through this process. We acknowledge that the main improvement evident is with regards to the appointments in terms of detail of appointment type, notification of appointment changes and publication of notes following appointments.

- Maternity staffing is under constant review and managed as per local and national guidance. Any safety concerns relating to multi-disciplinary team staffing would be raised at divisional management boards with escalation to the executive and non-executive maternity safety champions aligned with CNST Safety Action 9 guidance. Such concerns of this nature would be further discussed at Trust Board level meetings. The review of safe maternity staffing levels is completed using the nationally recognised staffing establishment tool Birthrate+ with the application of professional judgement. ELHT introduced the Birthrate+ acuity app in 2023 which assesses point prevalent staffing levels based on the clinical needs of every woman and infant for most areas of the maternity services. This enables service leaders to determine whether their unit is adequately staffed as safe levels throughout the day and night.
- We continuously review the information we provide to our women and families and look to ensure this is available through a range of sources and formats to meet the preferences and accessibility needs of our women and families. We are therefore pleased to receive feedback that our website is most useful, and that the displayed information on our wards supports understanding of a range of topics such as health promotion and promotion of Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership and Family Hubs. We acknowledge feedback that in some areas there is a lot of written information displayed especially in poster formats. We will work closely with our team and communication colleagues to ensure the posters displayed are relevant, up to date and where possible reduce the number of posters. We are currently working to implement key information being available in digital video formats including being provided in the languages required by our women and families and look forward to hearing the feedback on this new and innovative information channel in future.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen volunteers and staff for the work undertaken to support the Trust in highlighting positive findings from service user, carers, families, and staff, as well as highlighting areas for improvement.

With kind regards,

Tracy Thompson



Email: Info@healthwatchbwd.co.uk