



Walking the Patch
(Healthwatch Devon Enter & View Experience)
Maternity Services, University Hospitals Plymouth
23rd September 2019

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University Hospitals Plymouth

Details of the Service Visited

Service address:

Derriford Road,
Crownhill,
Plymouth
PL6 8DH

Website:

<https://www.plymouthhospitals.nhs.uk/maternity>

Accountable persons:

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Date of visit:

23rd September 2019

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Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Devon would like to thank the service provider, service users, visitors, staff and Healthwatch Devon volunteers for their contribution to the Enter and View programme.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

To view the Care Quality Commission report for this home please visit

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/RK950/inspection-summary#npimaternity>

What is Enter and View?

Part of the Healthwatch Devon programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists and pharmacies. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation - so we can learn about, and share, examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Safeguarding

Healthwatch Enter and Views are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch Devon safeguarding policies. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything that they feel uncomfortable about they will inform their lead who will inform the service manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer they will be directed to the Care Quality Commission where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

Partnership

Healthwatch Devon has partnered Devon Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) to undertake Enter & View across maternity services in Devon

Devon Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) is a collective of parents (and parents to be) and organisations who support maternity services (health professionals, charities, Healthwatch, non-health professionals) working together to review and contribute to the development of local maternity care across Devon.

For more information about Devon Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) and how to get involved or share your experiences of maternity care please see

<https://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/~devoncommunities/devon-maternity-voices-partnership>

Visit to Maternity Services, Derriford Hospital

Purpose of the Visit

- To explore the experience (specifically labour & ante-natal) of the services patients received during their pregnancy so far.
- To ask what the patients think are the most positive things about the service they have received and whether they get enough support
- What areas do they think could be improved and how?
- How were they involved in the decisions about their care?
- Have they been given the support they needed to feed their baby?
- Raise awareness of the Maternity Voices Partnership and feed view back anonymously

Background Information

The University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust formerly until 1 April 2018, Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust is the largest hospital trust in the southwest peninsula. It is an NHS teaching trust and works in partnership with the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry. The trust provides healthcare to people living in the south west peninsula and visitors to the region and provides training and education for a wide range of healthcare professionals.¹

The maternity services at Derriford Hospital has recently been rated as requiring improvement following a full inspection by the Care Quality Commission during April 2019.

The maternity services at Derriford Hospital (University Hospitals Plymouth) provides expectant patients a variety of services including inpatient midwifery care, midwifery care in the community and home birth support.

The unit has a catchment population of 450k, covering areas either side of the Devon/Cornwall border and nearly 4000 babies are delivered with the unit every year.

A proportion of the visit was also observational, with the authorised representatives walking around the maternity unit and observing the surroundings to gain an understanding of how the unit operates and how the patients are engaged with staff members.

What we observed and told by the staff

The staff members on duty at the time of the visit were well briefed on our visit and made an effort to speak to us /tell us about their work, they were welcoming and appeared that way with service users. There was lots of positivity from staff about the service, how they could involve service users, whilst also an acknowledgment of the over challenging working environment (demand on service/more complex cases in pregnancy).

The staff also noted the effect of the Pink Ladies who provide care and support with feeding on the Transitional Care Ward which has a positive effect on the ward. .

What we saw

On arrival Healthwatch posters were displayed around unit and reception area, the whole unit was very clean and tidy and there is a safeguarding team on the unit. There were lots of pictures and photos on the wall to help lighten up the wards which also included advice posters on topics such as sleeping safely and tube feeding.

Within the unit there is a communal room on the Transitional Care Ward where patients can eat meals, enjoy coffee from the coffee machine, relax on the sofa, watch TV and the provision of toys for the children who are also expecting a brother or sister.

They have 'pink ladies') on the ward that are specifically dedicated to help women with feeding and care whilst they are on the ward.

There are two maternity theatres which mean patients don't have to be taken to the main theatres.

Womens Day Services

- Large waiting room which wasn't too busy when we visited, there is a TV screen displaying advice
- They have trained midwives in sonography so that they are able to carrying out the scans- this means they can give advice and answer questions when needed
- There are different wards related to maternity services- although they are signposted it could be confusing as wards aren't always named after the medical terms e.g. Argyll Unit.

The Posnatal Ward (Argyll)

- Post-natal- there are decorative drawings on the walls, a donation area for clothing and a small room for postnatal discharge briefing

Triage / Central Delivery Suite

- There is a large spacious waiting room on CDS with glass wall looking out onto garden. The room has toys and a birthing ball and they are looking to bring in a vending machine
- As part of the Snowdrop Appeal work will soon commence on a new bereavement suite which will have a dedicated entrance
- Delivery rooms were spacious, with nice designs on the window and a bathroom shared between 2 rooms
- They have a special enhanced observation room so that women don't always need to go to intensive care

The Environment

- An effort had been made to put lots of pictures and information up on the walls across all the areas, plus the team wanted to further develop this by getting service user input on what images they would like to see.
- There are two dedicated bereavement rooms which are for those who had experienced loss, these rooms were painted in more homely colors, and with soft furniture. There was also a butterfly placed on the door when the room was in use to let staff know so they could be quieter. With the new plans the rooms are positioned so those using them can use a different entrance/exist meaning they did not have to go through the labour ward, which is very positive for those having experienced loss.

The Service

- The service benefits from having midwives who are also trained in sonography (this has increased midwives understanding /skill set whilst also helping deal with the demand on sonography (national shortage)
- Women who have their baby in Plymouth benefit from the first trimester blood tests been taken by their community midwives (rather than in the hospital) this has the advantage that at the first trimester screening women are given their blood results (there and then alongside the scan) rather than waiting a few weeks for the result as happens in other areas. Feedback from staff found that was this is extremely positive and reduces the anxious wait for the results.
- Staff noted that they are dealing with increase in complexity in pregnancy and as a result now have a number of specialist clinics running, such as perinatal health, diabetes.

Observations from service user feedback

- There was a high level of satisfaction with service experience (this was mainly as a result of the staff) there was consistent high praise for the effort of staff (importantly this feedback was praise across the whole team i.e. Health Care Assistants (HCA), Consultants, Midwives etc.
- Some of the negative feedback we received was around unclear and lack of communication.
- One service user had not had a positive experience with midwife during labour did not feel listened too/felt communication was poor.



What the patients said

Ante-Natal Care

When asked about the services they have experienced during their pregnancy so far (antenatal care) there was in general a satisfied sentiment with comments such as;

- “Really good, had 3 different midwives on rotation which I liked as sometimes you always get new ones.”
- “Fab”
- “Pre-Labour was great, all brilliant.”
- “Brilliant.”
- “Everything’s been brilliant, wouldn’t fault the care. However, there was lack of communication beforehand as we have another child and couldn’t make arrangements- we weren’t told that we would be in for 5 days minimum.”
- “Appointments were always on time”

About Care During Labour

When asked about their experience of the management of their labour they were in general positive about their experience, however, there were some less favourable comments around the way the patients were managed;

- “Good, went in when waters broke, they gave me a pessary and then labour went quick.”
- “Wasn’t easy labour, but the staff were amazing.”
- “Felt treatment wasn’t good, waters broke and I got sent home but as I live 45 mins away we booked into a nearby hotel as we didn’t want to go home. The pains got bad but they said ward was too busy and wouldn’t give pain relief. The nurse was quite clumsy and had couldn’t get needles in right. She kept looking at her notes and not at me. I was then told to push but was only 4cm dilated.”
- “Labour was so smooth, had the baby in 30 mins. but “bit short staffed, only 1 midwife”- Family member.”
- “Had an emergency ‘C’-section last time, this time is was pre-elected and didn’t enjoy the experience (I had pre-eclampsia).”

Regarding Postnatal Care

The patients were also asked about their postnatal experience while in the unit and overall the comments were very positive.

- “Good.”
- “Brilliant- healthcare lady who was on overnight was wonderful, she didn’t stop all night.”
- “Lovely staff on ward.”
- “Great, if needed help trying to get him to latch on, they’ve been there.”

Positive Elements of the Service

The patients were also asked what they thought were the most positive things about the service they had received and overall the comments were very positive.

- “Healthcare Assistant- very lovely and helped me put my socks on. They always have time to stop and chat.”
- “Staff made it wonderful.”
- “Delivered baby successfully.”
- “Support- there’s always someone there, Maternity Care Assistants are invaluable.”

- “Very thorough, made me relaxed. In all appointments they have gone above and beyond.”

What About Support Provided by the Unit

The patients were also asked if they felt that they got enough support while they were on the unit and overall those asked felt that they did get enough support however, one patient thought that more support could have been provided during labour.

When asked what areas that the patients felt could be improved there were mixed views within the replies;

- “Nothing, it was really good this time.”
- “Nothing, it’s been brilliant.”
- “Bad labour experience, really down to 1 person’s care. Felt I wasn’t taken seriously.”
- “Staffing levels.”
- “I was breast feeding so missed period for hot dinner, so I had no dinner.”
- “Communication- doctors need to let you know what’s going on.”

Improving the Service

When asked how these could be improved there were mixed views within the replies, which included comments such as more staff, better furniture and allowing hot meals to be brought to the bed side

Involved in Decisions about their Care

When asked, all the patients felt that they had been involved in the decisions made about their care.

Feeding Your Infant

When asked about the support needed to feed your feed your baby all the patients responded in a positive manner., the comments are below;

- “Yes, I breastfed before and the nurses knew that, so they left me to get on with it.”
- “Yes, definitely.”
- “I have been through it all already so I know, but yes.”
- “Yes definitely- they supported my decision to switch to bottle.”
- “Loads of support.”

Consent to Share

All the patients consented to their views being anonymously fed-back to the Maternity Voices Partnership.

Conclusion

- The maternity unit is separated out into different areas, and may benefit from a map (this may exist , but there wasn’t anything obvious either in print or online) showing the different areas /how to get from one to another /what the name of the areas are /what happens in each area.
- Some of the comments made by the patients suggest that there is a requirement to improve the communications with between staff and patients.
- The comments collected suggest (rather concerningly) that a patient was sent home even though her waters had broken

- Overall all those involved on the day felt that they had a positive experience of the unit and the services it provided.

Service Provider Response: Derriford Maternity Services

We were delighted to host a visit with Healthwatch Devon and the Maternity Voices Partnership. We value the views and experiences of women and their families who choose to give birth in our area. We already give every woman the opportunity to share their experiences of the antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal period through our Friends and Family Questionnaires and this report has given us further feedback in order for us to continue providing women and their families the very best care possible. We look forward to working collaboratively with the Healthwatch Devon and the Maternity Voices Partnership in the future.

For copies of this report please visit the Healthwatch Devon website or contact: Telephone 0800 520 0640

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ⁱ https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/AAAH2673.pdf