



Maternity Services

A Hull LINK Report on Patients' Experiences of Local Services

July 2010

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What is Hull LINK (Local Involvement Network)?

Hull LINK is an independent network of local people and groups which has legal powers to examine health and social care services. Since 2008 LINKs have been set up across the country to give people more say in how these services are planned and run.

Our role is to find out what people think of local health and care services and enable them to suggest improvements. We can investigate areas of concern, make recommendations to services and get a response. We can also carry out spot checks, when necessary and under safeguards, to see if services are working well.

Maternity Services in Hull

In Hull, the majority of pregnant women are cared for during their pregnancy, birth and post natal by the Hull & East Yorkshire NHS Trust midwifery team. Maternity units are provided at two main locations: The Women and Children's Hospital based on the Hull Royal Infirmary site, and the Jubilee Birth Centre based on the Castle Hill Hospital site. The Women and Children's Hospital has approximately 6000 births per year with medical care available 24 hours per day. The Jubilee Birth Centre has approximately 400 births per year and is a midwife led unit. In the event of an emergency, mother and baby can be transferred to the consultant led unit at the Women and Children's Centre at Hull Royal Infirmary, and they may return to the Jubilee Birth Centre for post-natal care following the birth.

Every family in Hull with a child under 5 also has a health visitor. This service is provided by the City Healthcare Partnership and its role is to offer support and professional advice to families through the early years from pregnancy and birth to primary school. Their work is mostly about prevention, helping parents and children to make the right choices in order to stay healthy and avoid illness.

Hull LINK – Why Maternity Services

Through the various engagement exercises that the LINK conducts, maternity services have been raised to the LINK on a number of occasions. The responses we have received have been quite mixed and have related to a number of different areas of the maternity service, and so it has been unclear from the information provided if there is a particular theme or area of concern. Therefore to see if the views we have gathered so far are shared by other residents of the city, the LINK decided to take a patient experience approach to gather wider information and experiences to determine if there is any need for further investigation.

What We Did

A small task and finish group was set up to plan this work. This consisted of Helen Blanchard of the LINK staff team, and three members of the Steering Group: Wendy Bennett, Pam Quick and Sam Bell.

The group prepared a four page survey for distribution among people who had experiences of maternity services. In order to obtain feedback that was relevant to current service provision, the group decided that the survey should be directed to those that have had a baby in the last

five years (since April 2005). The survey was split up into four sections: experiences during pregnancy, experiences during labour and birth, experiences whilst in hospital, and experiences after returning home. We worked closely with the Doula Project and local SureStart centres to distribute the survey, along with other local Women's Centres, Children's Centres, nurseries and pre-schools. The LINK was also invited to join the Maternity Services Liaison Committee who also assisted in distributing the survey.

This report presents the experiences shared in this survey and provides some pointers to service developments.



A total of 95 people replied to our survey with 83 respondents being of a white background and 10 of a BME background (2 responses were not given). An additional 4 surveys were received but are not included within the analysis as they were either in relation to births from other parts of the country or dated back to 1987.

The year of the births reported were as follows:

Year Born	No. of births
2004	2
2005	4
2006	7
2007	15
2008	22
2009	38
2010	14

NB: There are 7 extra births here than the number of survey responses as 7 respondents provided details of two births.

The location of the births were as follows:

Location	No. of births
Women & Children's Hospital	86
Jubilee Birthing Centre	7
Home	2

The responses to our survey came from the following areas of Hull and East Yorkshire:

Postcode	No. of respondents
HU1	1
HU2	1
HU3	5
HU4	0
HU5	17
HU6	5
HU7	9
HU8	20
HU9	14
HU10	1
HU11	2
HU12	10
HU13	2
HU14	1
HU15	0
HU16	0
HU17	1
HU18	1
HU19	0
HU20	1
YO25	1
DN19	1

Respondents were asked how they rated the services provided to them during their pregnancy:

Response	No. of responses	%
Excellent	41	43
Good	36	38
Satisfactory	0	0
Unsatisfactory	17	18
Poor	1	1

As these results show, the majority of respondents had either an excellent or good service during pregnancy. The positive comments we received include:

“Both the Jubilee Birth Centre and the midwives at Macmillan Centre were fantastic during my pregnancy.” 2005

“Service was good, kept informed and up to date in all aspects of pregnancy.” 2005

“Having my appointments at the Lemontree Children's Centre was much more convenient and relaxing than having them at the doctors.” 2006

“Plenty of scans and kept on top of symptoms - was under consultant care.” 2007

“Community midwives very friendly.” 2007

“Midwives and doctors completed tasks very well throughout both pregnancies.” 2007/8

“Had a really nice midwife and a really bad needle phobia, so she eventually got my blood at 7 months pregnant. She was really patient and made me feel right at ease.” 2007

“I had support from Doula - Kelly Bride; she worked at Castle Hill Hospital. She was great and built my confidence up and I felt secure with her as I have had a bad experience through domestic violence when I was pregnant.” 2007

“Midwife and doctors all looked after me very well especially when my first was born 5 weeks early by emergency c-section, therefore more care was given to me for second pregnancy.” 2007/8

“I had a multiple birth and received lots of check-ups during the pregnancy. These helped me to feel everything was 'under control' and problems would be picked-up quickly.” 2008

“I had pre-eclampsia during my pregnancy and felt the support I received from the doctors and midwives was fantastic. They made the whole situation a lot easier to cope with and answered all questions I had.” 2008

“All staff at Hull Women's and Children's Hospital were fantastic and put my mind at rest when I had fears.” 2008

“By seeing community midwives ante-natally on a regular basis was beneficial to me post-natally.” 2009

“This was my second pregnancy and my midwife was lovely. Kept me relaxed and very happy during my few hours in the hospital.” 2009

“The community midwives were very friendly and approachable and I saw the same one regularly.” 2009

“Caroline my midwife for my last pregnancy was fantastic.” 2008/9

“I thought that the preparation for birth sessions at the Jubilee Birthing Centre were excellent.” 2009

“As this was my first pregnancy, I found that when I felt worried or had concerns I was thoroughly re-assured and asked to come along to Hull Women's & Children's to get checked and I felt at ease and didn't feel like I was wasting anyone's time.” 2009

What People Felt Could be Done Differently

In our survey some people reported that they would like to have received more information, more antenatal classes, and more easier and consistent access to GPs and midwives.

Information

“I feel more support as a first time mum could have been provided.” 2008

“I feel the service in birth was good although I did have complications. It was before I went into labour I could have done with more support.”

“Lack of information.” 2010

“Would have liked a bit more information about what to do. I was a bit unsure of things to do and not to do.” 2010

Antenatal classes

“Only one antenatal clinic was offered. 'Introduction to Birth'. I was disappointed there wasn't more classes/help. Would have liked to have known more about labour, i.e. breathing exercises like they used to!” 2008

“I only had medical antenatal appointments because I had twins and an underlying medical condition, therefore I had no antenatal classes or received any information regarding antenatal groups or classes, nor did I have a birth plan!” 2008

“There was very little training and information available from the NHS in the form of ante-natal classes. I was only offered one half day session which covered labour and birth, but no advice or information on caring for the baby after he was born.”

“Better more robust antenatal groups /sessions would be good.” 2007/2009

Contact Time

“I could never get into my doctors when I needed to, which resulted in going through the whole pregnancy not seeing my doctor.” 2008

“No contact with midwife until 16 weeks pregnant, so no early pregnancy advice.” 2008

“I was given a booking in appointment that was much later than usual into my pregnancy. Therefore I didn't get much information early and was anxious waiting for test results as there was only a small window for any further testing if there had been adverse results.” 2009

“Not enough contact with midwife when needed. Tried to contact own midwife and was passed through so many channels and didn't get results. Didn't feel like ADU believed symptoms.” 2010

“Only saw a midwife four times during pregnancy, expected more appointments.” 2010

Midwives

“Not all midwives in the team seemed supportive of our decision to have a home birth. GP totally unsupportive. It was stressful to think that I may go into labour whilst the unsupportive midwives were on call.” 2005

“I would rather have had a named midwife who was there for me throughout the pregnancy with whom I can form a bond with and feel I have a relationship with them.” 2008

“I had one midwife who was excellent and provided wonderful, personal and supportive care. Staff at Castle Hill (ultrasound) were also great. However, I think the quality of care depends on the individual midwife - some are not as dedicated as others.” 2008

“The only thing to point out is that during pregnancy I didn't see my allocated midwife more than once. I'd have preferred to see the same midwife for the duration of pregnancy.” 2009

“It would have been nice and more reassuring to have seen same midwife throughout pregnancy instead of a different one every time.” 2009

‘I would rather have had a named midwife.’

Comment from a service user

Respondents were asked how they rated the services provided to them during labour and the birth of their baby:

Response	No. of responses	%
Excellent	53	56
Good	26	27
Satisfactory	10	11
Unsatisfactory	2	2
Poor	3	3
No response	1	1

Many respondents spoke positively about their experiences during labour and birth at both the Women's and Children's Hospital and the Jubilee Birthing Centre:

"Totally felt that the midwives were confident in their role. They, once called, did not leave our home and they stayed for 14 hours. I never felt that they wanted to rush things, in fact when things got difficult and I wanted a way out they wouldn't accept that hospital was what I wanted - they knew the birth plan and what we wanted." 2005

"My midwife was fantastic and I felt she knew what I needed and when. The atmosphere at my son's waterbirth was calm and relaxing. I felt in control (most of the time) thanks to the calming attitude of the midwife and assistant." 2006

"I was treated with dignity and respect by all the midwives who assisted me." 2006

"Continuity of care at Women's & Children's Hospital was fantastic throughout. No negative experiences, despite my baby's heart rate dropping and being rushed to theatre, everyone stayed calm which enabled me to stay calm." 2006

"I had my first child at the Jubilee Birth Centre Castle Hill Hospital and based on the excellent experience first time chose to go a second time." 2007

"Very helpful staff and friendly." 2008

"Had to have an elective c-section due to pre-eclampsia. Staff very helpful in explaining procedure and made me feel relaxed (as possible) & confident in what would happen." 2008

"I have no complaints at all, everyone was brilliant." 2008

"Had to have an emergency c-section everyone was great." 2008

"I went into labour five weeks early so was admitted in the very early stages and kept in the whole time. I ended up needing a c-section over 24 hours later, but the care I received throughout the whole time was second to none." 2008

"The midwife who delivered my twins was fantastic. All the help I received was fantastic." 2008

“I had midwives and a student with me throughout my labour and was never left alone, which made me feel better and more in control of the situation.” 2008

“My midwives were amazing. Everything that was going on was explained to me.” 2008

“During labour the midwives were great with me and after.” 2008

“After hearing so many negative experiences of Hull Women's & Children's Hospital I decided to go to the Jubilee Birth Centre. Both my babies were born at Jubilee and I have nothing but praise for the place and the midwives that work there. I recommend Jubilee to all my pregnant friends.” 2007/2009

“The staff on the labour ward were excellent so friendly, and talked to you. Just excellent.” 2009

“The midwife allocated to me recognised that I had planned to have a homebirth. She moved the bed and confirmed with the registrar that I didn't need constant monitoring. She found an oil burner and bean bags etc and I feel that she assisted me by leaving me to have an active natural birth. The midwife also brought mobile gas and air allowing my baby to be born on a bean bag rather than on the bed.” 2009

“Midwives were excellent and ensured I was calm during labour as they were calm and relaxed but maintaining a level of professional ability.” 2009

“I had a midwife with me at all times. I was checked regularly and the midwife read through my notes.” 2009

“It all happened very fast, but felt in good hands the whole time. Would not be apprehensive about any other pregnancies - as Castle Hill Hospital was my first choice, I was more than happy with the care at Hull.” 2009

“Midwives were excellent. They couldn't help me anymore than they did during labour, it was brilliant.” 2010

“I had a planned section and all the staff on the labour ward were excellent, I could not have faulted anything.” 2010

‘Midwives were excellent and ensured I was calm during labour as they were calm and relaxed but maintaining a level of professional ability.’

Comment from a service user

What People Felt Could be Done Differently

In our survey some people reported that there was not always an adequate level of communication, units appeared busy and understaffed, and that different midwives were not always consistent in their approach.

Communication

“My files were not read properly which meant that we had to stay in hospital over the weekend to wait for my baby to have a blood test.” 2006

“Only issue with second labour is my husband got sent home and wasn’t called back when I asked and he missed the birth. Neither of us were happy with that.” 2008

“For most part was good but a doctor who put a cannula in the back of my hand (in case of emergency - something to do with my daughter opening her bowels before birth). The Doctor didn’t speak English very well and I didn’t understand what he was telling me. Also wasn’t allowed to move into a different position during birth as I had heart monitor strapped to my stomach.” 2009

“I went in to be induced but the hospital were not expecting me so I got sent home. When I did go in the father was sent home then they wouldn’t ring him when things started, so I had to ring him otherwise he would have missed the birth. Poor admin in arranging appointments – staff had not been told why I needed to be induced and then staff were asking me why. Lack of communication among staff.” 2009

“Midwife on the ward took 20 minutes to come with pain relief when it was requested.” 2010

“I was looked after by the midwife at Hull Royal Infirmary and have no problems with the labour and birth, although once baby was born we had to wait 3 hours before someone brought us a bottle, after repeatedly asking.” 2010

Staffing levels

“The maternity unit was very busy. People were giving birth on the antenatal ward and I had to wait three days before there was a space on the labour ward.” 2008

“Unfortunately, the evening after my daughter was born, the Jubilee Centre had to close due to its staffing levels. I was ready to come home but it could have been upsetting.” 2008

“I was left for hours without being seen in the antenatal ward and they wouldn’t assess me. Then there was no room for me to go on to labour ward, but when I did get there, the midwives were really good.” 2009

Consistency of midwives

“I had a midwife and a trainee with me, who were both there for the majority of labour, but the midwife was nasty and complaining that her shift was running over. Afterwards they left me alone in a right state” 2006

“I had five different midwives throughout labour; I feel it would have made my experience less scary if a key midwife or even two if necessary had looked after me.” 2007

“Midwife left me to it during the first part of labour - would have liked more advice and help with labour/contractions. Next midwife took over and was superb after epidural.” 2008

“My first midwives were amazing, but when shifts change, the second midwife was snappy and rather unpleasant to me.” 2008

The following comments are isolated issues that were not reported by other respondents however should be documented in this report:

“I had emergency caesarean and my daughter’s head got cut in the process.” 2004

“Had labour at Jubilee and 36 hours into it I was rushed to hospital (Hull Women's and Children's). I was put on a bed with blood stains covered with a sheet and I discharged myself back to Jubilee when my daughter was 4 hours old and I was made to walk from the delivery ward to the car.” 2007

“I went into labour Wednesday, finally admitted Friday 1pm. At 4pm sent to L&D only to be told I wasn’t in proper labour as the pain was only in my back and sent down to antenatal ward. Even though I was in absolute agony with contractions coming on top of each other, the only pain relief I received was co-codamol! I had to beg and beg for them to examine me and when they finally did I was 8cm! Why isn't there more awareness about back-to-back labour? I did my research on the net and there are 100's of other people who are left to suffer because of it just like me. Back-to-back labour is known as the most painful form of labour so why don't the midwives know this and why are we made to suffer with no pain relief and no support?” 2009

‘My first midwives were amazing, but when shifts change, the second midwife was snappy and rather unpleasant to me.’

Comment from a service user

Respondents were asked, if they had their baby in hospital, how they rated the services provided to them during their stay:

Response	No. of responses	%
Excellent	39	41
Good	22	23
Satisfactory	22	23
Unsatisfactory	7	7
Poor	1	1
No response	4	4

As these results show, the majority of people reported that they had either an excellent, good or satisfactory service whilst in hospital. The positive comments received in our survey include:

“The birthing centre at Castle Hill Hospital was excellent and I was very comfortable during my stay. I was encouraged to stay longer if I wanted to as I was getting a lot of support breastfeeding. I felt that the midwives had enough time to support me breastfeeding night and day and the unit is a huge benefit to women in my area.” CHH, 2006

“Midwives all very supportive and the facilities at Jubilee are excellent. A very relaxed environment.” CHH, 2007

“The meals at Jubilee were tiny (even the large portions), and had to bring in meals from outside. But the room was quiet and having 1-to-1 care really helped me breastfeed and learn different techniques that would help me. Also the aromatherapy pads and creams helped with the discomfort after birth.” CHH, 2007

“I had to stay in for one week after c-section and my daughter was in Scubu for 5 weeks (absolutely fantastic).” HRI, 2007/08

“I was in hospital for three weeks both before and after birth. Found nursing staff very helpful and developed good relationships with them.” HRI, 2008

“The midwives were there 24/7 and helped with my uncomfortable stitches and baby blues. They were great.” HRI, 2008

“I stayed in hospital for 10 days after the twins were born because they had to be tube fed. Again, the care we received throughout this time was excellent.” HRI, 2008

“I was in a room on my own - lovely! The staff were great.” HRI, 2008

“The Jubilee Birth Centre was excellent.” CHH, 2007/2009

“Excellent support including breastfeeding and bathing advice from very friendly and professional staff. Excellent post natal care including aromatherapy, etc which made all the difference to the new mum. Loved the nursing chair I could use during my stay there.” HRI, 2009

“Only in for 8 hours and was very happy with staff, my care and my baby's care.” HRI, 2009

“Midwives at Hull were great, very pleasant and made me feel at ease.” HRI, 2009

‘Midwives all very supportive and the facilities at Jubilee are excellent.’

Comment from a service user

What People Felt Could be Done Differently

Many people felt that they needed more contact time and support after giving birth. People also reported a number of negative experiences in terms of the attitudes of staff and again reported that they felt the units were understaffed. A significant number of people also reported that they did not receive enough support with breastfeeding.

Support

“Not enough staff, left for long periods without advice.” HRI, 2005

“I have had three children, with differing levels of care but my experience with this one was definitely the worst. Whether it was because he was my third child or whether due to the fact he was born at Christmas, I am not sure, but I was basically left entirely alone - even though I had had a caesarean. Calls went unanswered and at one point having requested warm water to clean his bottom - I was left with a full bath of water on my bed, a baby and me still hooked up to a drip for over an hour in the middle of the night. I requested to leave as soon as I could as I felt friends and neighbours would be more help than the 'professionals'.” HRI, 2007

“I was discharged the day following the birth of my baby. I felt this was too early as I was not quite ready (physically) to care for the baby on my own.” HRI, 2007

“My baby was taken away after a few hours for tests and ended up in intensive care - nothing was explained properly. In my room the cot was left and my family did their best to hide it. After 2 days I was moved to another room - a nurse helped me put all my stuff on the bed and moved it, but left me to lift and move everything off (I had an emergency c-section and was really tender). Once I'd moved all my stuff from the bed I was in pain and needed painkillers - I pressed the buzzer and no one came for over three quarters of an hour. I rang my partner to see if he could ring reception for someone to come.” HRI, 2008

“There is little support on the wards once baby is born.” HRI, 2008

“Once admitted to the ward after having my son, I was placed in a room on my own and told that there would be a nurse at the station outside my room, but she disappeared and never returned leaving me alone with no advice. It was 9 hours later that I finally had a midwife to visit me and talk through any issues that I had, so I did feel fear and alone.” HRI, 2008

“Baby born at 11am, kept in that night due to blood loss during giving birth. First child and on my own and no one showed me how to feed him, wind him, change his nappy etc. It was just assumed that I knew how when actually I had no idea.” HRI, 2009

“I was left days with blood on the floor. When I called for help it would take them quite a while to get to me even though I had a c-section.” HRI, 2009

“During labour and birth I was treated excellent. Aftercare (in hospital) poor!” HRI, 2009

“I was left to it, forgot she was there so forgot to discharge her.” HRI, 2009

“I went to aftercare at Jubilee and wasn't impressed, felt like they favoured the women breastfeeding. Hull Royal Infirmary, had no problems.” HRI, 2010

Staffing levels

“I felt that the unit was very understaffed and staff seemed occupied with auxiliary tasks more than spending time with new mothers - if possible they should have more free time to spend with patients.” HRI, 2007

“Sometimes rushed.” CHH, 2008

“Excellent at Jubilee Birth Centre after I transferred back there, but didn't like it at Hull Royal Infirmary. Couldn't sleep due to noise etc, and staff were very busy. Couldn't blame the staff though, just probably due to lack of resources.” HRI, 2009

“Although it was my second baby and I felt confident, I felt the ward was understaffed so I didn't like to bother the midwives as they were so busy.” HRI, 2010

“The ward where I was taken after the birth was overcrowded and the rooms were very small. It was very difficult to be able to speak to a midwife or nurse because the ward was understaffed.” HRI, 2009

Midwives & staff

“On the whole, the midwife(s) were helpful, although I wasn't given a side cot for 21/22 days, despite having a caesarean birth and subsequent stomach upset. Also, the auxiliary nurses were much less helpful and often showed a negative attitude or weren't very caring.” HRI, 2007/2009

“I was OK, I just found one midwife rude. I had my baby that day and I said about me having stitches and she replied 'so have most people'. Yes, maybe so but I still felt unwell and very sore, I had only given birth that day (I didn't have any easy labour).” HRI, 2009

“In the labour ward, I received excellent care. As I wanted a home birth, I felt that this was respected. During my time on Rowan ward, I felt that my care was inconsistent. Midwives were good but reception staff were unhelpful. Night staff told me that my baby would not settle in the night if I breast fed. I felt this entirely inappropriate and unhelpful.” HRI, 2009

“Night staff on ward were unhelpful.” HRI, 2009

Breastfeeding support

“Not enough support for breastfeeding, was told to just keep trying but not shown how. Felt that the midwives on ward were too busy to deal with us.” HRI, 2007

“The support I received was appalling especially the support on breastfeeding. I was made to feel isolated in the ward and discharged myself early.” HRI, 2008

“Not much support with breast feeding.” HRI, 2009

“The aftercare was terrible. I was breastfeeding and having problems getting my daughter to 'latch on'. I rang buzzer a midwife came, didn't speak to me, grabbed my breast, put my daughter on and walked off (appalling).” HRI, 2009

“I would have liked the staff to have had more time for you and more support in breastfeeding instead of forcing you into it.” HRI, 2009

“On arrival to the ward after giving birth, baby was attached to the breast and I was left for three hours with no one checking me. Midwife was then refusing to give me a bottle to settle the baby. I had to argue with her to get this. There was limited support in helping me latch baby to breast.” HRI, 2010

“OK, although I would have liked more help on Rohan Ward. Didn't get shown how to breastfeed like I was supposed to, but everything else was fine.” HRI, 2010

“Lack of support with breastfeeding. The second time I got re-admitted care was much better.” HRI, 2010

‘Didn't get shown how to breastfeed like I was supposed to, but everything else was fine.’

Comment from a service user

Baby's Stay in Hospital

We also asked respondents if their baby had to remain in hospital following their own discharge.

Response	No. of responses
Yes	8
No	83

If so, we asked how they rated the services provided to both them and their baby during this time.

Response	No. of responses
Excellent	5
Good	1
Satisfactory	2
Unsatisfactory	0
Poor	0

Those that reported a positive experience stated:

“Can’t thank them enough.” 2007/08

“The paediatric surgeon was marvellous, as were the Nurses in NICU.” 2007/2009

“The staff on special care baby unit were fantastic. Very helpful for expressing milk and welcoming.” 2009

There were other however that were not so happy with the level of information or support:

“I got my own little room while my baby was in intensive care, nothing was explained properly still. I was still confused as to what was happening. Once he had moved to Scubu Ward one of the midwives was horrible and made me feel useless - this led to me letting everyone at home do everything i.e. feed, change bath, etc and feel this played a part in my post-natal depression.” 2008

“Nurses seem to favour babies. Nurses inattentive. Expect mothers know how to tube feed and don’t make allowances for disability - despite telling them about my disability it seemed forgotten by the next day. Inconsistent staff. Kept moving my baby without informing me - had to go looking for my baby.” 2009

‘The staff on special care baby unit were fantastic.’

Comment from a service user

We asked respondents how they rated the services provided to them at home after having their baby.

Response	No. of responses	%
Excellent	39	41
Good	33	35
Satisfactory	10	11
Unsatisfactory	1	1
Poor	1	1
No response	10	11

These results show that the majority of people had either an excellent or good experience of the services provided to them after returning home. Those that spoke positively stated:

“The midwives from the Macmillan Centre were fantastic - very supportive and came out for visits even though my daughter was born on 23 December.” 2005

“Professional team and kept well informed and up to date. Mature team, any questions was well received and answered at all times.” 2005

“First baby - the additional visits by nurse specialist in paediatric surgery were invaluable for advice and support.” 2007/2009

“Had visits from community midwives and health visitors. Found advice good and non-patronising.” 2008

“Barry my health visitor was excellent. He had experience in working in NICU Ward and he looked at the notes and made sense of it all to me. If ever I have a problem he's always there.” 2008

“The midwife made regular visits and was always available to answer questions and queries. The health visitor was also fantastic, always on hand and still continues to be so.” 2008

“Fiona & Caroline were excellent at giving advice for the first two weeks at home. Lisa my health visitor is excellent always there if I have any queries regarding any of my three children.” 2008/2009

“My midwife at home was excellent, friendly made you feel good about being a first time mum, helped with breastfeeding, health visitor the same.” 2009

“The health visitors were brilliant. Always there when needed and treat mum and baby excellent!” 2009

“Excellent. I cannot fault community midwifery. I had some worries relating to labour and was referred to a consultant for a de-brief. This was really helpful in allowing me to understand my experiences and I felt that my questions were taken seriously.” 2009

“Fantastic midwife, really friendly and informative, always on time and overall a real pleasure to have both been in her care.” 2009

“Very useful introduction to baby massage and advice for how to deal with baby's colic. Also very useful sleep clinic later on. Loved the fact that it was the same nursery nurse offering the support - it enabled me to build up a trust relationship with her.” 2009

“The same midwives came all the time. They didn't rush things and they were very helpful and answered any concerns I had.” 2009

“My health visitor and midwife were extremely helpful and made me feel confident at how I was adapting to motherhood. I knew that they were only at the end of the phone if I needed them for anything.” 2009

“Excellent. Midwife was brilliant, gave me lots of help.” 2010

“Good support from midwife/health visitor.” 2010

What People Felt Could be Done Differently

Again some people reported that they would have like to have received more support and felt that sometimes there were problems with staffing levels. People again also reported that they would like to have received more support. In addition, some comments were made in relation to health visitors, however the most recent one dates back to 2008.

Support

“Sometimes hard to get in contact with someone for advice.” 2006

“Had one home visit.” 2006

“I had two visits from a midwife and one from my GP.” 2008

“Nobody came round to see us, even though they made appointments with me. I had to keep ringing them to get my daughter 7-10 days blood test. My health visitor came once then moved departments and didn't see my health visitor until 7 months check up. I would leave a message with the health visitor but nobody rang me back.” 2009

“Had two home visits then was discharged.” 2010

Staffing levels

“The midwives were all great but very rushed! Sometimes I felt as though they didn't have time for me - they were so busy.” 2008

Communication

“Sufficient service and right attitude from staff and offered emotional support. More collaboration needed between staff.” 2009

Breastfeeding Support

“Midwives it was fine - only felt that more practical hands on support could have been given to get breast feeding going. This was a real struggle and took 6 weeks - only my determination & painkillers that got us through. Did use the NCT breast feeding counsellor who seemed to have more time/expertise/confidence.” 2005

“I did have some problems breastfeeding my son and to my dismay ended up bottle-feeding him. I felt I needed more support and my change from breast to bottle was readily accepted rather than the offering of support which I so badly needed.” 2006

“Again felt like midwife wouldn’t show how to breastfeed and was told to give baby bottle as his urine had gone red and he needed the calories quick.” 2007

“I found the breast feeding support from the children's centre (Sure Start) extremely helpful.” 2008

“Every time midwife visited and health visitor visited, told them baby was not appearing to be satisfied on breast, however they told me to continue breastfeeding even though they were concerned about baby's weight. They were more concerned about what I was eating.” 2010

Health Visitors

“Health visitor didn’t comprehend and understand the difficulties experienced in exceptional circumstances i.e. inability to breastfeed even though she was aware of chemotherapy treatment, as if she just blanked it out.” 2004

“The midwife was excellent. I didn’t like my health visitor; she was very stern and not very approachable if I had any problems.” 2007

“The initial care was excellent but my health visitor left after a few weeks, and to be honest I have not been as impressed with the health visiting side since then.” 2008

‘I found the breast feeding support from the children's centre extremely helpful.’

Comment from a service user

What did this survey tell us about areas for improvement and development in maternity services?

Those that had positive experiences during pregnancy largely attributed this to the reassurance that was gained through having regular check ups and contact time with professionals. People were made to feel at ease through having friendly and approachable midwives and felt confident in knowing they were kept up to date of progress and were able to address any issues or concerns as soon as they arose. There were others however, dating from 2005 up to present day, that did not have the same level of consistency in terms of accessing services or seeing a regular named midwife. As a result some people did not experience the same level of confidence or reassurance, whilst others felt more information could have been provided to them.

With regards to the experiences that were had during labour and birth, there was much praise for midwives and hospital staff, with an emphasis on their professionalism and calming approach, and also the level to which they kept parents-to-be informed of what was happening. For some, oversubscribed wards and an inconsistent attitude of midwives were a concern; however these concerns do not seem to be so apparent in the last two years.

Again, many people spoke very positively about their stay at both the Jubilee Birth Centre and the Women's and Children's Centre. Like comments relating to pregnancy and birth, people attributed these positive experiences to supportive midwives and staff and being made to feel at ease. However there were a significant number of comments relating to poor experiences, largely due to not receiving enough support or guidance which at times left new mothers feeling quite distressed. In addition, many people felt they did not receive enough support with breastfeeding, which appears to be a consistent issue over the period the survey covers.

Only a small number of the people surveyed had experience of their baby having to stay in hospital following their own discharge. There were mixed responses as to people's experiences, however due to the level of responses in this area, it is not possible to draw any comprehensive conclusions on this part of the service.

With regards to the experiences of services provided after returning home, there were many positive experiences reported. However as with all other aspects of the service, there have been others that have not been as fortunate in receiving the same consistent level of service, particularly in terms of support and attitudes of staff.

In summary, the key areas that have emerged from the results of this survey are:

- People would like to see an increased provision of ante-natal classes.
- Although a high level of care is being received by many, this is not happening for everyone and so more consistent support through all stages of the services is required.
- The ability to ensure mothers-to-be to see their allocated midwife needs to be addressed. This will also help minimise the problems people have had in adapting to the relationships with different midwives.
- Measures need to be taken to minimise the number of occasions wards and units are understaffed.
- People would like to see an increased level of breastfeeding support.

One of the key roles of Hull LINK is to collect people's experiences of services and to use this information to influence how services are planned and delivered. The purpose of this report is to provide feedback on how services are working for people using local maternity services. As well as exploring how patient experience can be improved in the future, it is also very important that we share positive feedback when we receive it and there is undoubtedly much to share from this report. The report has unearthed some areas that will need addressing and the LINK proposes that these be incorporated into the Maternity Services Liaison Committee's Priority Action Plan for 2010/2011.

Next Steps

- This report will be formally submitted to NHS Hull and Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust.
- Via the Maternity Services Liaison Committee the LINK will discuss the report and responses with local health planners and providers as part of our work to ensure that patients' feedback secures improvements in services.
- The report and the subsequent actions taken will be shared with people involved in the LINK through our newsletter and website.
- The report will also be sent to those who completed the survey and requested a copy so they can see what the LINK has done with their feedback.
- The task and finish group which worked on this will monitor progress made in securing improvements. This will be achieved via the LINK's place on the Maternity Services Liaison Committee.

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