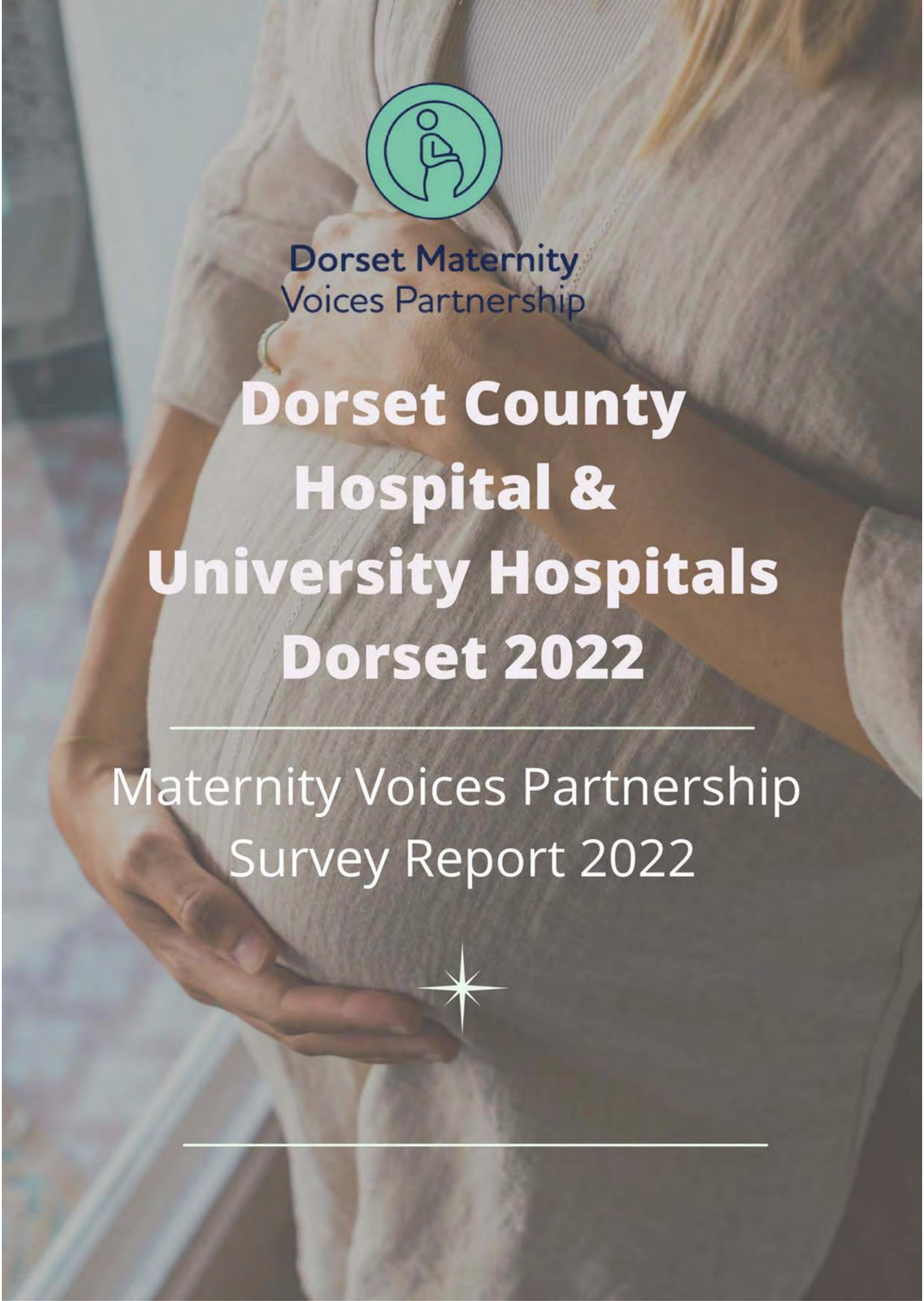

Dorset Maternity
Voices Partnership

Dorset County Hospital & University Hospitals Dorset 2022

Maternity Voices Partnership Survey Report 2022

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About Dorset MVP

Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) is an initiative that aims to involve women and their families in the development of local maternity services. MVP'S are independent NHS working groups that allow service user voices to be heard by local strategic maternity services management and commissioners, in order to drive improvement. The role of MVPs has developed over time, with increasing national requirements for service user involvement. MVPs are now an instrumental and equal partner in the development of maternity services.

Rachel Filmer

Dorset's MVP was launched in 2017 and has grown significantly ever since. The Dorset MVP team is made up of Rachel Filmer who has been a Lead Representative since 2017. In January 2022 the team expanded through the recruitment of two chairs. Kelly Hickson is the Chair for Dorset County Hospital and Marianne Scott is the Chair for University Hospitals Dorset.

Kelly Hickson

We work together to listen to and engage with service users and their partners, in the community and online, about their experiences of maternity care in Dorset. We then represent that feedback in meetings with clinical and organisational staff, to ensure service user voices form part of strategic decision making. We are also involved in specific pieces of work, such as the design of care pathways. We also have a number of service user volunteers, and we link with local stakeholders who help us to gain invaluable feedback from the local community.

Marianne Scott

Dorset MVP Aims

We would like Dorset's maternity services to be the best they can be, which means that they must meet the needs of those using the service. Women and their partners must be shown that their voices and experiences matter.

We are passionate about improving maternity services for all, and especially aim to ensure inclusion of seldom-heard minority groups. To address this, we created an additional survey aimed directly at partners.

They are various ways we try to engage with service-users including in-person and online through our webpage and Facebook group, online events and workshops.

Local Context

Dorset is a county in south-west England on the English channel coast, covering an area of 2,653 square kilometres. Dorset is largely rural with many small villages, a few large towns and no cities. The only major urban area is on the south -eastern end of the county and consists of the towns Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch. More than half of the county's residents live in the Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch conurbation. The other major towns are Dorchester and Weymouth towards the west of the county. Dorset's population has a high proportion of older people and a lower than average proportion of young people than the national average. Around 95.2% of Dorset's population are reported to be of white ethnicity.

Antenatal care and scans are provided at the hospitals in Poole and Dorchester, as well as appointments within the community. For birthing options, Dorset offers the choice of two maternity units, Poole and Dorchester, each with obstetric-led and alongside midwifery-led units, and two home birth teams. There are also specialist community midwifery teams who work with families requiring additional support, and specialist antenatal clinics.

Some antenatal and postnatal services are offered in community settings, other local hospitals as well as in the home. Some Dorset women are offered services by neighbouring counties such as Wiltshire, Somerset and Devon for those who live close to the borders.

Survey Design

The data within this report was collected between the April and June 2022, using an online survey. This was shared on social media via our MVP Facebook page, community group and shared by local stakeholders.

The survey was aimed at those who have used services within the last three years and covered the whole maternity journey including antenatal, birth and postnatal care as well as specialist services. We asked respondents who had more than one pregnancy within the three year period to tell us about their most recent pregnancy only. The survey was anonymous, and there were no compulsory questions.

The responses were collated and analysed by the Dorset MVP Chairs. Thematic analysis was used to identify the most popular themes within the qualitative feedback, and these are presented alongside the data, ratings, direct quotes and service user stories. This survey was designed to obtain a snapshot of service users experiences of maternity services across Dorset.

Photo by Tracey Scorer

Who Took Part?

242 Respondents

100% of respondents identified as female

Time

On average the survey took 10 minutes to complete

Pregnancy

53% were responding in relation to their first pregnancy,
37% to their second pregnancy and
10% for their third or subsequent pregnancy.

Age

74% were aged 25-34
22% 35-44
4% 18-24
None of respondents were aged under 18 or over 45.

Ethnicity

The majority of respondents described themselves as white British (229).
7 were 'white other'
1 was 'Black / Black British / African / Caribbean'
1 'Asian/Asian British'
3 were from 'mixed or multiple ethnic groups'.

Sexuality

98% Heterosexual 1% Homosexual / Gay / Lesbian and 1% Bisexual

Antenatal Care

General Insights

94 % of respondents attended all antenatal screening offered

63 % saw the same midwife during their pregnancy

77 % of women felt they had the opportunity to talk to their midwife about their emotional/mental health

We asked women about the quality of information they were given during their antental care....

50% of women said that they had been given information about the **mental health support** available but 41% said they had no information - 9% weren't sure.

"I really struggled with my anxiety during pregnancy and was only asked during my booking appointment which was over the phone about my emotional wellbeing" (UHD)

"I'd have liked a little more time with my community midwife to discuss my birth options particularly around pain relief options as the online information is sometimes hard to understand." (UHD)

Many respondents felt they needed more information: only 18% of women felt they had enough information on **feeding their baby;** only 20% had enough information on **giving birth;** 16% had enough information on **making healthy choices**

67% were made aware of the Maternity Matters Dorset Website.
29% were not made aware of the website, 4% weren't sure

As I did not have the same midwife throughout my antenatal care it was too difficult to build a rapport and talk about how I was feeling (UHD)

When asked about their antenatal care...

How involved did you feel in decisions about your antenatal care?

"I felt the consultant I had wasn't listening to me (DCH)"

Average score was 7/10
(1 = 'not at all involved'
10 = 'completely involved')

"This time around I felt much more involved in my care and decisions for my health and wellbeing, a stark difference from my first birth in 2018. My mental health was taken very seriously this time. (UHD)"

If you were under the care of a **consultant or specialist clinic** (e.g. diabetes clinic) during pregnancy, how would you rate the care you received?

"The preterm birth team were AMAZING!!! (UHD)"

Average score was 7/10
1 = 'very poor care'
10 = 'excellent care'

How would you rate your antenatal care overall?

"Community midwives and ANDA were always helpful and provided excellent care (UHD)"

Average score was 7 /10
1 = 'very poor'
10 = 'excellent care'

50% rated between **8+** for this question.

Antenatal Themes

- Continuity of carer
- More time needed to discuss birth options
- More information needed antenatally on birth, infant feeding, and healthy pregnancy
- Long waits to be seen in clinic
- Staff need to be more informed on previous traumatic pregnancies/birth
- Women need to feel listened to in clinic appointments

Antenatal: Areas For Improvement

"badger net introduced during my pregnancy; led to less eye contact between midwife and patient and therefore feel less informed"

"I spent my entire pregnancy worried due to the lack of information and negative comments received during my maternity care." (UHD)

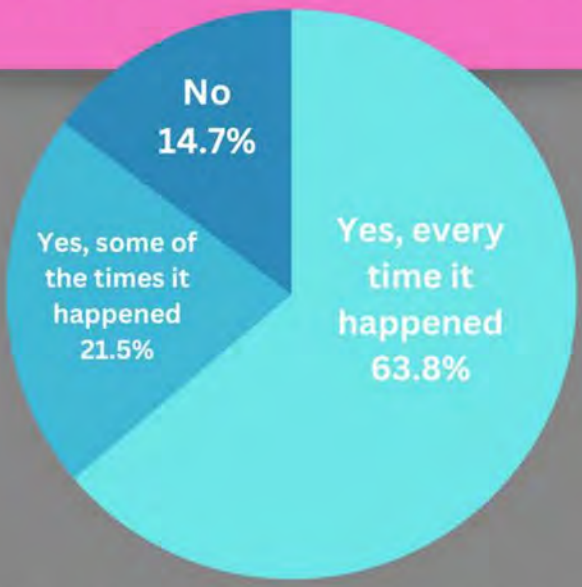
"Initial contact was a little insensitive, my 3rd pregnancy after a recent still birth. I had to explain my story repeatedly at bloods appt/ scans until I was picked up by the same midwife and consultant. I had to ask for a sticker on my notes." (UHD service user)

"My experiences were mostly good but mainly because I was super informed and advocated hard. My experiences on ANDA and with a registrar towards the end of my pregnancy weren't great. Lots of coercion."

"getting hold of the community midwife team is difficult"

Labour Line

If you experienced reduced movements during pregnancy, did you call Labour Line?

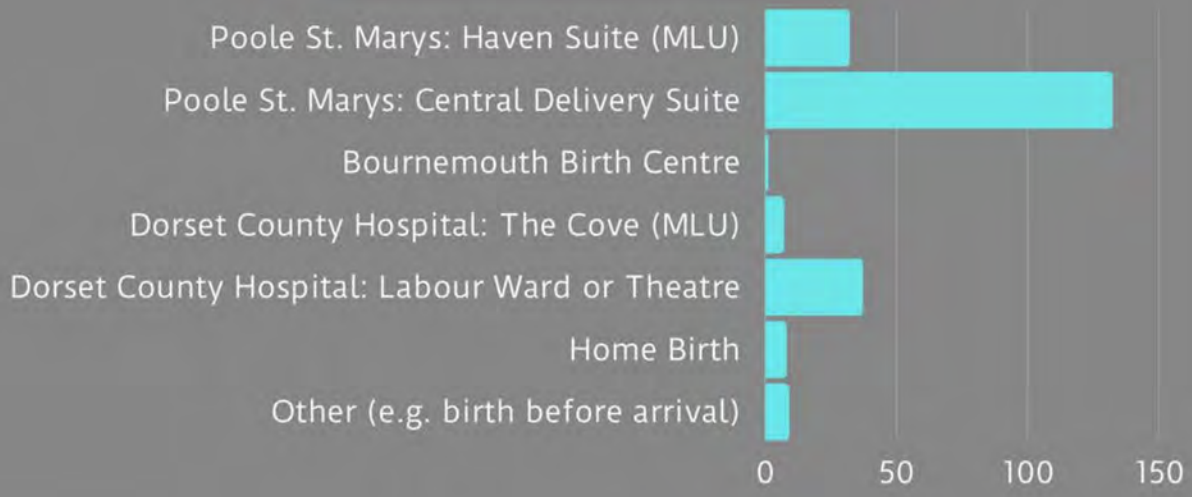


"Labour line does not work efficiently. I could hardly ever get through and sometimes it wasn't staffed."

"labour line could do with improving as sometimes we rang and couldn't get through"

Birthing Experiences

Where was your baby born?



"One midwife stayed with me through my birth and she was amazing. I felt that she was led by me in the birth. It was a wonderful experience (DCH)"

"I had a really good experience for my elective c section. I was given good support during & after the birth. (UHD)"

Service user Tracy and midwife Nikki in The Cove. DCH

Birthing Experiences

How involved did you feel in decisions about your care during birth?

57% rated between "8 - 10" for this question

Average score 7/10
1 = 'not at all involved' 10 = 'completely involved'

> *This time around I felt much more involved in my care and decisions for my health and wellbeing, a stark difference from my first birth in 2018. My mental health was taken very seriously this time. (UHD)*

> *Zara and Sara made it a great experience... caring and professional the whole way through helping us achieve our wishes after a previous traumatic birth. I can't thank them enough (DCH)*

How would you rate your care during birth?

70% rated between 8-10 for this question

The average score was 8
1 being 'very poor' and 10 being 'excellent'

> *Staff were very calm and reassuring and very positive which meant I felt the same way (UHD)*

> *Staffing levels really affected our labour and I felt very worried and stressed leading to labour (DCH)*

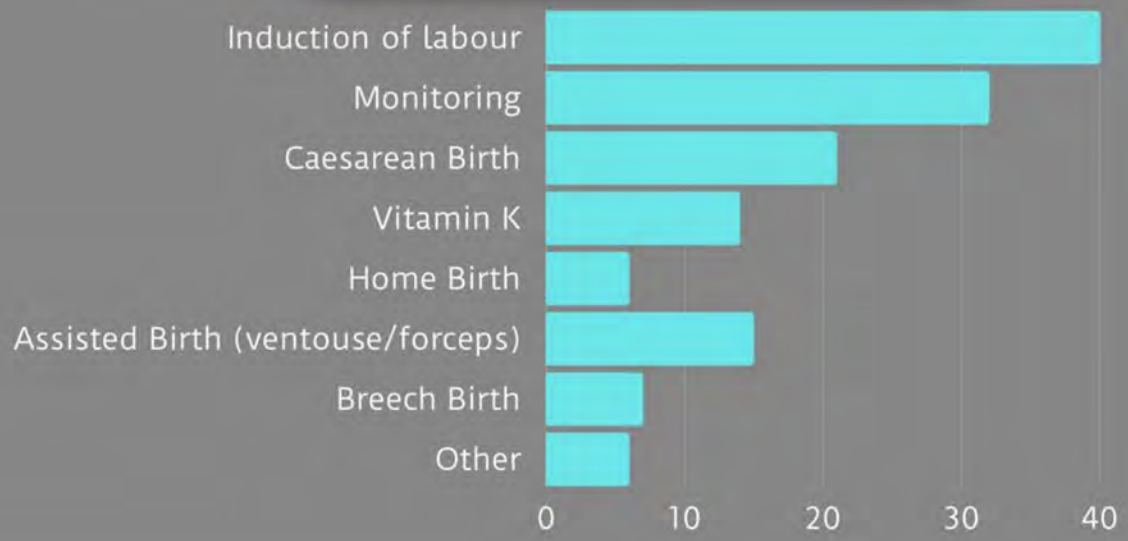
Did you have enough information to give informed consent on all aspects of your birth?

67% answered yes. This led to a more positive birth experience: 80% of this group rated the care during birth as 'high'

20% did not feel they were given enough information, and 12% weren't sure.

Of these 64% answered high in 'How involved did you feel in decisions about your care during birth'.

If you answered no, which aspects of birth do you feel you needed more information about to make an informed choice?



Birthing Themes

- Covid visiting restrictions had substantial impact on pregnancy and birth experiences
- Service users were keen to compliment homebirth team
- Care during birth was scored highest, compared to antenatal and postnatal care
- More attention needs to be given to respecting choices made by service users
- A number of respondents commented on staffing levels affecting their labour - particularly length of induction
- Some needed more information in order to make informed choices during birth.

Birth Experience Comments

I have a hearing impairment and staff were all very accommodating for this and I felt like it was taken into consideration and adjustments made for me during labour. (UHD)

I had planned a home birth. Called when in labour to say no midwives available. (DCH)

I had an emergency c section but still am not aware of what actually happened leading up to this being required. (UHD)

The home birth team are absolutely amazing. (DCH)

Student midwife was fantastic. The wait post induction to getting a room was ridiculousy long (4days) (UHD)

Some newly qualified midwives were amazing and made our traumatic experience more bearable (UHD)

My midwife pushed for me to have a vbac in the pool and helped it be as natural as possible resulting in a healthy quick birth. She made it a great experience and was caring and professional the whole way through (DCH)

Postnatal Care

The average rating for **Postnatal Care** was **6 out of 10**

Respondents scored their **experience of staying in hospital after birth** as **6 out of 10**

"I felt I was left on my own overnight with my newborn after my husband had been asked to leave, I had no idea what I was doing and no one offered me any support (DCH)"

"I feel I was left too long without seeing/hearing my son after birth (5 hours) (UHD)"

"The postnatal support was absolutely amazing. I honestly can't fault it, there were so many avenues for support I could have approached eg for feeding or help if I needed. The midwives were always ringing to check on me, which felt so wonderful, and there appeared to be good communication between my midwife and the health visitor. (DCH)"

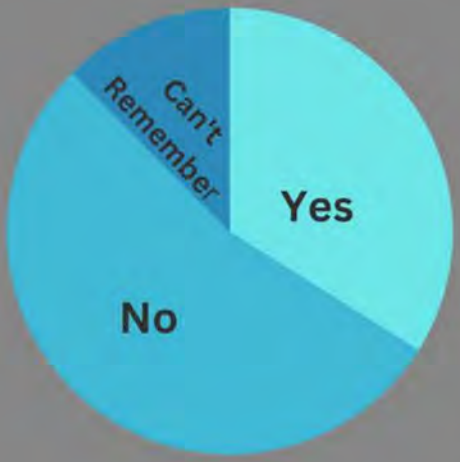
"Very impressed with all the care I received, particularly postnatally (UHD)"

Postnatal Care

We asked:

"Did you see / speak to your midwife after you gave birth?"

Two thirds of service users said **yes**



In contrast, when asked

" Were you offered the opportunity to talk to your midwife about your birth experience?"

over half of service users said **no**

> *Had a traumatic delivery, yet I wasn't told I could have a birth debrief. (UHD)*

> *Very little interaction after birth. Not sure if it was because of lockdown or because it was a second pregnancy (DCH)*

> *The Cygnet homebirth team were fantastic throughout my entire pregnancy and afterwards.*

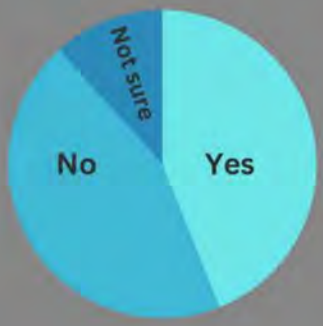
Postnatal Care

We were interested to hear about postnatal support in the community. It is important to note that many respondents gave birth during the covid lockdowns.
However, this was clearly an area that could be improved.

"Do you feel you received enough support from your midwife after your birth?"

41%

answered yes for this question.



"Do you feel you received enough support from your health visitor after your birth?"

48%

answered yes for this question

> *While there is support available it is not clear what there is. You have to search yourself for help for rather than knowing where to go straight away. (UHD)*

> *My only postnatal care came from the HV calling to see how I was. I feel like I slipped through the cracks with having an ill baby and it was difficult to access care (DCH)*

> *A health visitor call at least a month after birth would have been appreciated (UHD)*

Postnatal Themes

- Service users need to be more informed of the option of having a **debrief after birth**
- Some felt they needed **more face to face contact postnatally** - several commented that their **postnatal depression was missed** due to this
- **Feeding support could be improved,** including for those having second and subsequent babies, due to staff assumptions that they would already have enough experience
- Service users with **babies in NICU** told us they needed **more support** to visit and feed their baby
- Some respondents said that **staffing levels impacted on their hospital postnatal care** (e.g. not receiving pain relief when needed)

Postnatal Feedback

Midwives and health visitors need to give more support to mums more who have babies in NICU. (UHD)

Pain relief not always forthcoming post c section. (DCH)

My health visitor was amazing! (UHD)

Postnatal ward seemed like they were short staffed. I struggled to get the help I needed. (UHD(

Photo by Tracey Scorer

Discharged from midwife over the phone. No support from health visitor- who forgot me, I had to ring and chase for routine appointments (UHD)

After the birth of the baby, I feel it would have been far more beneficial to see the same/couple of midwives rather than a different one every time (UHD)

Postnatal ward felt very focused on baby but not me (UHD)

Feeding Support

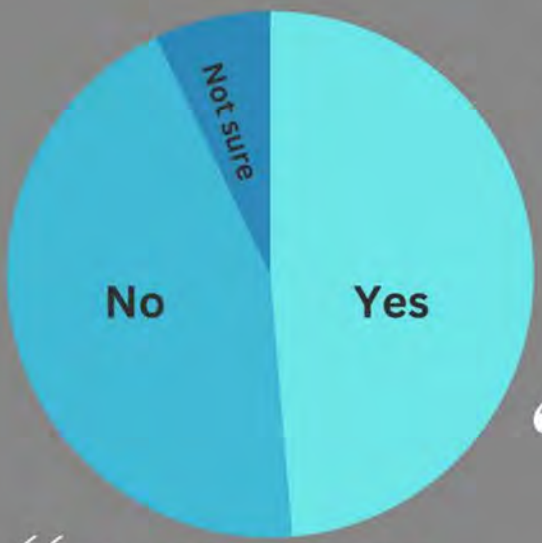
We asked:

"Did you receive enough feeding support after your baby was born (either in hospital or at home)?"

49%

of respondents felt that they received enough support with feeding.

Many commented that they would have benefitted from more support with feeding their baby, either in hospital or at home in the community.



"Nurses asking if it was OK for my baby in NICU to have formula when I had informed them of my decision to breast feed. (UHD)"

"The Bournemouth breastfeeding support team were exceptional."

"There was no conversation with me about feeding options or colostrum collection pre birth (DCH)"

"Not enough support was provided to help breastfeed my baby"

"I stayed in hospital for 3 days and nobody picked up a tongue tie. (UHD)"

"Tongue tie service was excellent (UHD)"

Overall Care

We asked women:

"How would you rate your maternity care overall?"

The average rating was

7 out of 10

Foetal medicine unit was excellent (UHD)

Transitional care unit staff were great but under resourced (UHD)

Midwifery care was excellent throughout. Consultant prenatal care was poor. (UHD)

I was informed and involved in all aspects of my care, felt heard and important at all times, and received fantastic care during my labour and delivery. (DCH)

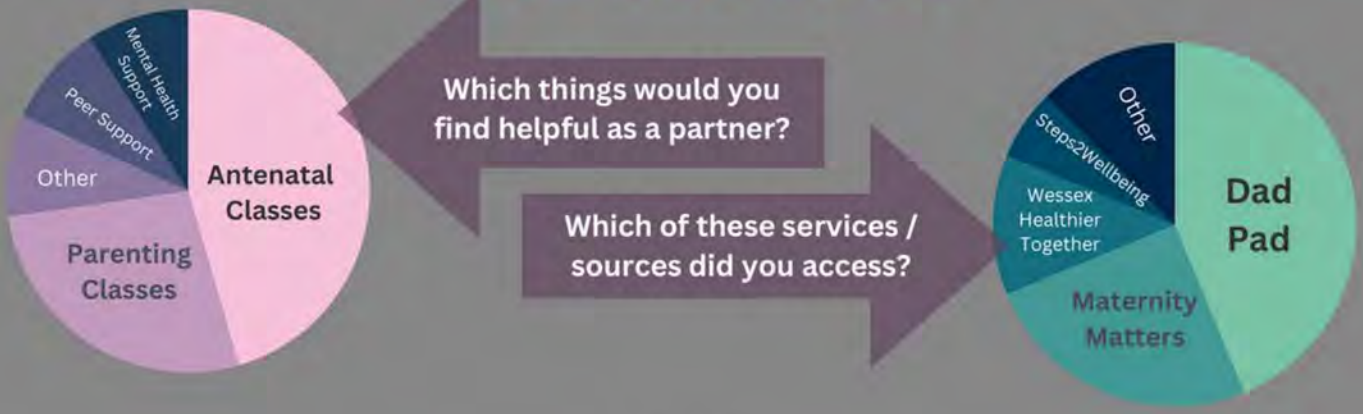
Every single midwife and student midwife were impeccable and made me feel so comfortable. I really cannot thank everyone enough for everything they did for myself and my baby boy! (DCH)

The care I received was outstanding for the most part, even following through to NICU and the health visitor. (UHD)

Partner Survey

We asked:
"How involved did you feel in your partner's care?"
Respondents scored this

6.91 out of 10



We asked:
"How could maternity services make you feel more involved as a partner?"
Respondents said:

Dedicate a few minutes to assess how dads are feeling

Maybe appointments at home even if just one

More Dad groups / classes. More talk regarding dads involvement.

To ask if I fully understand everything and if I had any questions.

Not being able to go to scans or appointments when my partner had reduced movements was very hard as it is my baby as well after all.

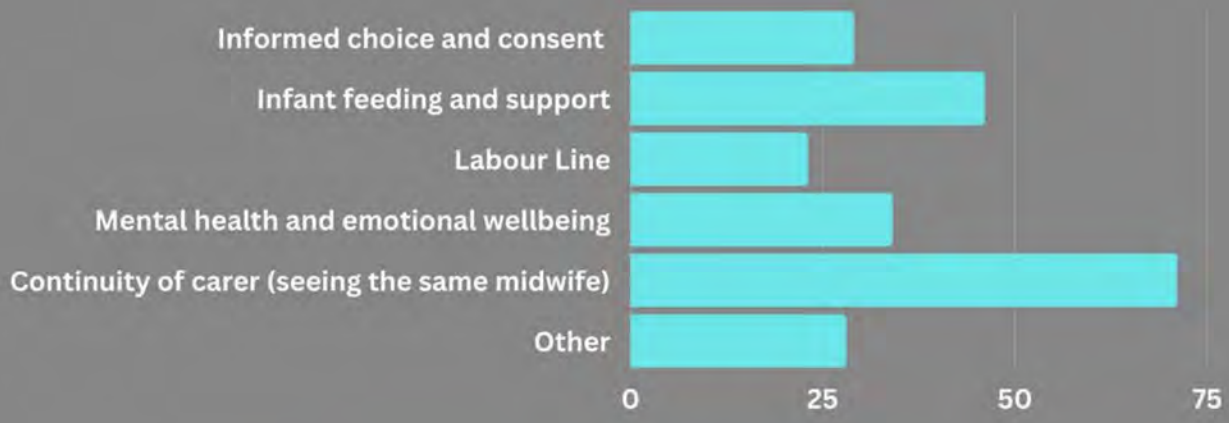
This is equally our baby and I want full involvement.

Postnatal support for Fathers is very bad. Midwife didn't ask if I was OK at all. Only the Health Visitor asked 3 weeks after my daughter was born

Fathers who do want to be involved should be supported, not made to feel superfluous.

Additional Insights

If you could choose one area for Dorset Maternity Voices to focus on in the next 12 months, what would it be?



How do you think we could make Dorset maternity services better?

Key themes:

- Better staffing in postnatal wards
- More mental health support
- More information on the available support
- Seeing the same midwife more often

Service User Comments

We had a student midwife who was with us for our entire journey. This continuous care was amazing and we felt so supported and well looked after by her. (UHD)

Staff were incredible. Having had losses before and being an older first time mother, the team were so understanding of my needs, my anxieties, my feelings throughout. I felt fully supported all the way (DCH).

The waiting time to meet consultants at Bournemouth were too long.

Health visitor was excellent- a great shame this service is so under resourced as I'd like to make more use of it

Midwife was kind and helpful but I felt she was overly invested in her own birth preferences without first understanding mine (UHD)

Midwives were brilliant, I felt so supported and my choices empowered - I can't thank my midwives enough and will be grateful forever. (UHD)

I couldn't be happier with the care I received. I am forever grateful for all the midwives and consultants for making me feel so informed and in control. (DCH)

The whole experience felt like you were on a conveyer belt. My concerns were dismissed (UHD)

I cannot fault the team at Poole. I had some last minute changes and needed to be induced and all the staff we amazing and I couldn't have felt more cared for.

Service User Stories

I couldn't fault my care, especially around labour/delivery. I felt listened to by the midwife in labour line who was happy to be led by me around coming into hospital as I felt I needed to, or waiting at home for contractions to progress (which I stated I didn't want to happen due to speed of my first baby's arrival). The midwives on the unit were fantastic - unobtrusive, kind and knowledgeable and took my lead around my care decisions. I felt well supported throughout. I did feel that some of the decisions around restricted visitation for appointments and in hospital should have been lifted sooner as this directly impacted my antenatal care (husband not attending growth scans/consultant checks) and care for my friends who had to stay in hospital and not have a partner there to support them (UHD)

My antenatal care was not amazing as I was seen by 7 different midwifes and there was no continuity of care. Whenever I had an antenatal appt I felt rushed and I didn't have time to talk about all of my doubts due to staff shortages. My birth and labour care was brilliant, however once I was moved to Central delivery for epidural everything went downhill and even though I was making informed choices they weren't being respected and staff kept trying to coerce me into doing something I was choosing not to do. I didn't feel respected or listened to. My postnatal care was ok but I had lots of struggles with breastfeeding and don't feel I had enough support with this. (UHD)

I had an emergency c-section and a baby born with VACTREL association and the doctor and her team did an amazing job of getting him out safely and quickly. She came back when I was awake to explain what happened and all the decisions they had to make for both of our safety. And whilst the baby was sent straight to Southampton for surgery without me meeting him the midwives around me were really understanding of what I was going through and helpful. (DCH)

Future Plans

This report was designed to give an insight into the key themes that were identified throughout the survey. Dorset Maternity Voices plan to use these themes to inform our work programmes over the next 12 months and beyond.

We would like to invite you to attend our first Dorset Maternity Voices Partnership meeting to discuss these results and help inform our work for the next year.

We would like to say thank you to all 265 service users and partners who took the time to respond to this survey, participated in our Facebook community group, and shared your personal stories with us. Your voices are vital, and will always be the basis for our work as an MVP.

How To Contact Us

Dorset Maternity
Voices Partnership

If you would like to give feedback, get involved in future events, or volunteer as a service user representative, we would love to hear from you!

Email: maternityvoicesdorset@gmail.com
Facebook: @DorsetMaternityVoices
Website: www.maternitymattersdorset.nhs.uk/support/maternity-voices