

Torbay Maternity 15 Steps Visit

29th November 2024

On the 29.11.24; Mair Davies, Hannah O’Sullivan, Alexis DiBattista (MNVP) and Service User Rebecca toured Torbay General Hospital Maternity Unit for the annual DMNVP 15-Steps Visit.

This report documents our observations and thoughts as we visited the various spaces that a maternity service user would visit throughout their pregnancy and highlights positive impressions as well as constructive feedback for improvements that are considered to impact the service user experience.

Overall – the whole unit had a very friendly feel, made that way by the staff who were attentive and welcoming. There was ample information available to service users at relevant points and the whole unit was clean, well lit and more often than not had natural light/windows in most areas.

Broadly speaking across the whole unit, the main recommendations which we’d say should be an immediate focus would be to create or signpost an accessible bathroom, urgent storage provision for equipment, upgrading/redesigning space available and modernising equipment like chairs and cots. Additional recommendations include: personalising units a little by including a welcome board and/or staff ‘who’s who’, naming rooms and/or having staff names on consultation rooms.

Please read the report for context on the above and individual recommendations per floor of the maternity unit.

“With both the John Macpherson ward and the delivery suite it does feel that the facilities have outgrown the space, something which of course cannot be helped but I would love to see maternity care have its own bespoke facilities in future.

Across the board I thought all of the staff we either met or just passed in corridors were extremely friendly and welcoming. They made me feel comfortable. Every area that we visited felt clean, hygienic, well lit and welcoming. It was good to see water in all areas too. There is clearly a requirement for more storage in almost every area but I must say its clear the staff are doing their absolute best with finding room for equipment in the space that they do have.

In the day assessment area, John Macpherson ward and delivery suite, I feel it would be helpful to have a board dedicated to who’s who of staff, pictures with names and job roles would feel very welcoming, it would also serve as a good reminder of who is who especially when you are meeting lots of people in what could be a stressful situation. At the end of your care it could be helpful for you to look back on this to remind you of staff, something very helpful when giving feedback. This would be particularly helpful when you are not consistently seeing the same member of staff, for example during my own pregnancy I had extra growth scans, at each of these I saw a different consultant, something which felt a bit uncomfortable. However if each time I visited the day assessment unit had I seen names of consultants with their pictures, I think I might have felt more reassured. I would also love to see more of the posters with the uniform key on, again helpful and reassuring to people especially those who suffer from anxiety or are neurodivergent.” – service user feedback



Upon walking into the Womens Health Unit main entrance – lots of clear signage to maternity both via the lifts and the stairs. The lifts are quick to call and the signage for each floor was clear inside the lifts which was helpful to enable choosing the correct floor whilst within the lift (vs outside).

LEVEL 4 WOMENS HEALTH UNIT

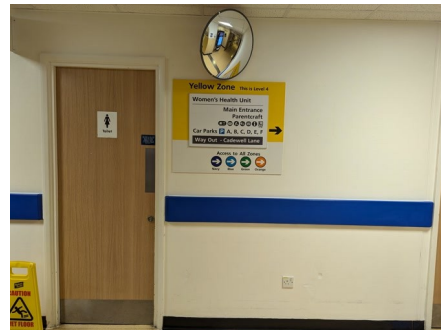
Upon exiting the lift at level 4 for the Womens Health Unit Antenatal Clinic, Ultrasound and Maternity Day Assessment – there were small A4 posters on the wall opposite which we felt are missed – particularly the ‘Midwife Thankyous’. We felt that there was an opportunity for this poster to be in the lift given its a place service users and families frequent and may be waiting or prompted to think about their experience.

Upon leaving the lift and walking towards the main corridor – the signage needed an arrow pointing left to the ‘Womens Health Unit’, as currently all other hospital departments are signed to the right and this is confusing.



“Outside of the lift the signage could be improved, I remember my husband and I being confused about which way to go during my pregnancy” -service user feedback

Toilets are well signposted and were clean. There were QR codes in the bathroom for service users to access help for Fear Free (re violent partners), NHS sexual assault support, IBS research and DMNVP feedback.



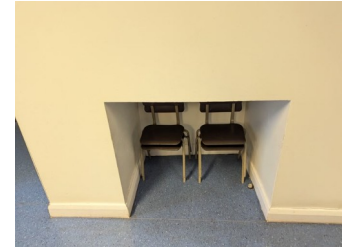
ANTENATAL CLINIC, ULTRASOUND AND MATERNITY DAY ASSESSMENT:

Upon entering the Antenatal Clinic the waiting area was spacious and it was clear where the reception desk was. The room has natural light; there was no background music playing to create an atmosphere or give a little sense of privacy when talking. There was space and mounting for a TV but no TV – this is a missed opportunity to get service user attention and advertise important relevant information (moving screens attract more attention than posters).

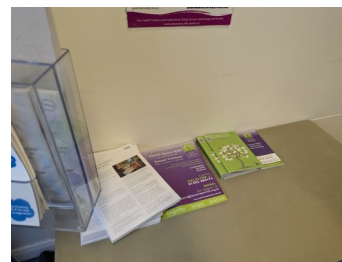


The QR tree on the wall is a lovely source of information, very prominent when sitting in the waiting area, as are the feedback boxes both for 'Friends and Family Trust Feedback' and the DMNVP feedback. Great to have existing feedback on a notice board to demonstrate how important it is. The QR code tree just needed to have the breastfeeding QR codes added in this prominent space as some service users may not see the other QR code trees in the unit if they have no need to re-visit.

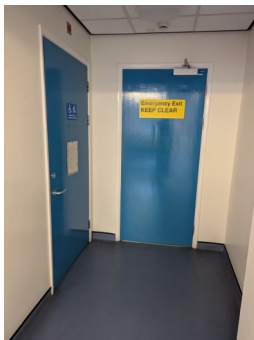
Lovely that you have toddler chairs provided however we felt these were 'hidden' and easily walked past. Could more colourful signage be provided to make the use of the chairs more welcoming should they be required?



Really impressed with the information in the back corner – both the quantity and variability of topics. Not overwhelming but enough to encourage someone to take information. One suggestion was that there were booklets on the table all alone re sexual violence – should a service user want this info but have their partner in the room with them, they are unlikely to take these as its too obvious. We felt these could be in the bathrooms/private area (if there was space) or a poster on the wall with the other posters that a service user could take a photo of and it would be less obvious to anyone around them that they were seeking this info.



There was a baby change available but this was not well signed when you walk into the Antenatal Clinic which is a shame, it was tucked around a corner and easily missed. Great that the Real Birth Company antenatal classes are advertised given its a new initiative and its key to drive uptake.



Water is available for service users in the waiting area via the water cooler with plenty of cups which is great to see.

“I felt that the day assessment area could benefit from the information all in one place rather than spread around the walls. A radio and TV helped the atmosphere of this area and the main waiting area would definitely benefit from a radio or background music” – service user feedback

We walked through to the 'Triage Area' where anyone sitting will be seen to promptly and from experience the service user said that healthcare professionals would check ladies seated here were being seen to. It can get very busy in this area and there is a lot of equipment sitting around against walls, easily knocked and hard to get past at busy times. There is a lack of storage space and this

was very apparent. There was a radio but it was not playing – this could be nice to muffle conversations being overheard in consultation rooms when the waiting area is right outside. The TV playing had a yellow screen/old.



A suggestion was made that the doors to the consult rooms could have names of the staff member working in there on the day so that the service user knows whom they're being called in to see or to know they're in the right place.

The quiet room was tucked away in a less frequented area, lovely big window – natural light and had comfy chairs. There was no information in this room, dedicated information is brought in with the healthcare professional depending on the service users circumstance which, we felt, is a tailored approach.

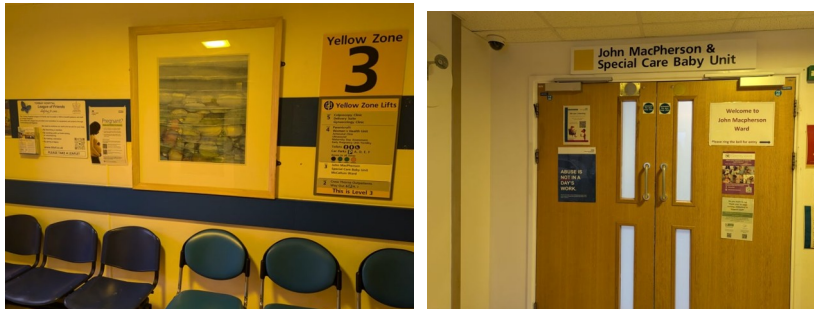


Recommendations:

- Consider best placement of A4 posters from entrance corridor to within lifts
- Consider 'arrow' on sign in main corridor to make the left direction to the unit clear
- Background music/ radio in waiting area?
- Working TV with key information for your service users in waiting room
- Upgrade the TV in the triage area as the screen has gone yellow
- Storage space required – especially in triage area where it can get very busy
- Clearer signposting of baby change
- Signage for nearest accessible bathroom if no provision within the unit itself
- Add breastfeeding QR branches/blocks to the QR tree
- Signpost the toddler chairs and make them look welcoming to use
- Sexual violence booklets to be more 'subtle' for a service user to take or take a picture of without being noticed
- Consider staff names being put on consultation rooms throughout the unit to add a personal feel and so the service user knows whom they're seeing/ that they're in the right place

LEVEL 3: JOHN MACPHEARSON AND SCBU

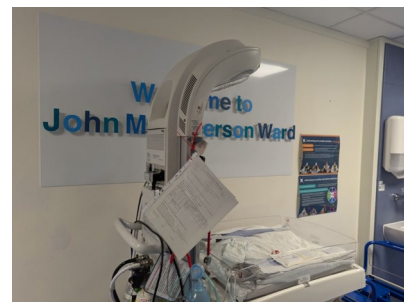
Upon exiting the lifts, the signage is clear to the units on this floor. Lots of seating which is helpful given that the doors are secure entry and family members may wait outside. Prominent visiting hours poster and contact details for the ward/ matron and senior midwife names and great to have the feedback ‘you said we did’ so prominent for those waiting. Also noted posters on the doors to the MacPhearson ward inviting feedback but also a staff poster about abuse not being tolerated.



MACPHEARSON WARD

Through the secure doors the ward had a friendly feel with staff approachable and on hand at the desk immediately as you enter. We did wonder about a ‘welcome board’ in various languages to be more encompassing various native languages and perhaps a staff photo board as to who service users may come across during their stay. We’ve found this really enhances the welcome and personalised feel to service users in other units and this may be a nice touch.

All rooms are along the corridors to the left and right. Equipment was prominent all along the walls and in front of signage at times which is a real shame, a real lack of storage was evident.



“Although the area was smaller than I expected it was welcoming and clean. The staff were all very friendly. The rooms were on the smaller side but for me personally I liked them and the staff have made the most of the space. A communal area or dining area would be invaluable here for both mothers and fathers” – service user feedback

The individual rooms had en-suites and were clean and fresh feeling – with natural light. Great use of the QR tree posters in the rooms and also a poster about ‘making decisions about your care’ very prominent – and we felt this was an ideal place to situate this information. There was ample surface space for belongings, a chair for a visitor, fan to keep cool and private bathroom.

There is no communal area here so any food/drinks required need to be requested. This takes away the opportunity of socialising for those staying or a place to ‘be’ outside of your room, not to mention increasing calls to healthcare staff to request beverages when there may be clinical demands taking priority.

We liked the staff uniform poster on the wall; whilst we know anyone working there would be happy to assist a service user and their family in the event of a query – we felt the visual

explanation of who was in each uniform type would help service users identify the right person for the right query when needed and should they wish.

SCBU

At the end of the corridor we entered the Special Care Baby Unit, again very friendly front desk able to signpost service users to where they need to go. We would suggest a photo board of staff in this unit too so that service users know who is who and whom they may come across during their stay.

There were 4 transitional care beds. There are bedside cots available and natural light for two of the end cubicles. The posters at the entrance to the room were relevant and focussed on breastfeeding and a little on postnatal contraception. There was adequate provision of cots – these were next to bed cots; not over bed cots which would help with bonding, feeding and minimise risk assessments on baby dropping. Over-bed cots are available at other Devon Trusts and to bring all services in line within the region this may be something the Trust wishes to look at.



Due to storage issues the middle cubicle was taken up with equipment with a curtain drawn around, which is a shame as it means one bed less for service users and unit capacity.

Recommendations:

- Welcome board in various languages and/or staff photo board
- Storage provision for equipment
- More posters available re: staff uniform/ who is who
- Look into upgrading to over bed cots to be in line with other Devon Maternity Services
- Should redesign or more space become available – a communal room for service users to frequent, get drinks, snacks and socialise.

Side Note:

MacCallum Ward – Is now the general hospitals ‘ready to go’ ward for any hospital patient from any department awaiting transfers out. This sits next to the McPhearson and SCBU unit. Should there be the opportunity for womens health to reclaim the space with the new hospital build this would greatly improve the storage issues that the womens health/maternity unit faces and would mean the whole floor is dedicated to women and baby care with no throughput of ‘other’ patients.

LEVEL 5: DELIVERY SUITE

This is the labor ward, we discussed the mixed terminology used on the unit could be confusing to service users and families when using the term labor ward/delivery suite interchangeably. Maybe a printed sign on the actual doors stating 'Labor Ward' could alleviate this and allow for mixed terminology?!

Upon leaving the lifts, very clear signage where delivery suite is and chairs/vending machine available for guests of service users.



8 beds available. Upon entering through secure doors, clear corridor which was noticeable – did not feel cluttered. Was clean, calm and inviting. Good bright lighting, quality and patient safety board informative – could have been a little more up to date – the last complete data entered was August (by comparison the other units were up to date).

“On entering this space it felt very clean and welcoming” – service user

The main desk is prominent and welcoming staff on hand to help. The desk/staff area could be redesigned and modernised to allow for staff to move freely behind the desk and keep documents/charts confidential. Due to lack of space, often information is pulled up and over the front desk onto the service user side and left on the top.

There is also a non-fixed desk sitting outside of the office space and considering the staff use, maximisation of office space and for aesthetic purposes - the whole desk area could be redesigned to look updated and fit for purpose. Due to this



layout there isn't the space for team handovers or private conversation and therefore these often happen in the break room. For staff work environment and therefore service user care given important conversations are had here, it would be beneficial to upgrade this space.

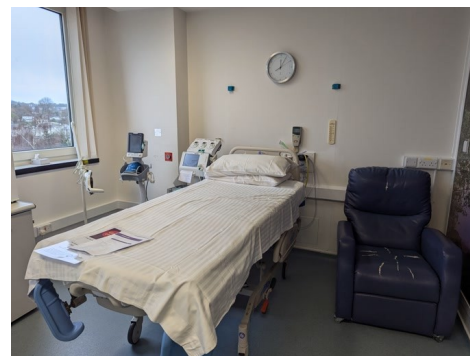
We visited a couple of labor rooms. Both were airy, clean, light and had en-suites. Natural light and big windows. The 'birthing positions' poster was on the wall which is a great addition to give service users ideas/reassurance of trying out what works for them and could be an aide for midwives if appropriate. The rooms are a decent size and all are of various sizes; with all the equipment in there and with the addition of service user belongings and a visitor, space could feel tight in some of the rooms. But they were functional.

“The room with the birthing pool was large and airy however it could really benefit from its own shower” – service user feedback

We visited the room with the birthing pool (1 pool available) which was overall a very spacious room; but due to the retrospective requirement for vents in the doorways to extract gasses (as part of an HSE requirement for staff) – you could hear conversations very clearly through doors and this led to the rooms feeling less private. The birthing pool was clean and had ample space around it, however it could be upgraded/modernised.



The picture of the baby in the pool on the wall was a nice touch, as were the decorative tea lights. In the rest of the room, the visitor chair upholstery was cracked and split – which despite being clean gave a ‘tired’ impression. This room had no washing facilities, so whilst en-suite, no shower or bath was available and a service user would have to go into the main corridor bathrooms to wash.



It was noted that there are no accessible bathrooms at all which could fit in a wheelchair or that didn’t have lips on the floor to step over.

Along a quiet corridor just off the main thoroughfare of the unit was the meadow room for bereaved parents. The room was spacious, had provision for baby in a thoughtfully named space (named by bereaved parents). The décor was calm, comfortable and serene – what we could imagine was as comfortable a place as possible for parents going through a challenging time of loss. The unit has 2 bereavement midwives to support families directly as well as support/guide other staff members through caring for bereaved families.



“The facilities for bereaved parents was excellent and it was nice to see that a lot of thought and care had been put into this” – service user feedback

Recommendations:

- Redesign of the desk/area for staff to handover/office area
- Storage provision
- Printed sign on doors of unit 'Labour Ward' so that both Delivery Suite and Labour Ward can be interchangeably used avoiding any confusion for service users' families?
- Labour room hospital info/guide (if not present?)
- Accessible bathrooms
- Reupholster chairs in labour rooms
- Consider upgrade to birthing pool in line with other Devon Maternity Units
- Update the quality and patient safety board as much as possible
- A delivery suite 'welcome board' with staff photos/names and/or 'welcome' in various languages?
- Nice touches to consider: personalising the names of each labour room and/or creating a selfie board (a decorative wall where parents can take a photo of their baby before going home – or add their name to the wall of the unit)?