
South Glamorgan Community Health Council

Maternity Services in Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan

November 2022



Accessible formats

This report is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download it from our website or ask for a copy by contacting our office.

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About the Community Health Councils (CHCs)

CHCs are the independent watchdog of the National Health Service (NHS) within Wales. CHCs encourage and support people to have a voice in the design and delivery of NHS services.

CHCs work with the NHS, inspection and regulatory bodies. CHCs provide an important link between those who plan and deliver NHS services, those who inspect and regulate it and those who use it.

CHCs hear from the public in many different ways. Before the coronavirus pandemic, CHCs regularly visited NHS services to hear from people while they were receiving care and treatment. CHCs also heard from people at local community events, and through community representatives and groups.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, CHCs have focused on engaging with people in different ways.

This includes surveys, apps, videoconferencing and social media to hear from people directly about their views and experiences of NHS services as well as through community groups.

There are 7 CHCs in Wales. Each one represents the “patient and public” voice in a different part of Wales.

Executive Summary

The CHC wanted to gain feedback and insight from patients and their families on their experiences with Maternity Services in Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan.

The CHC received a number of surveys which asked respondents to provide feedback on the following areas of Maternity Services:

- Antenatal Care.
- Labour and the birth of their baby.
- Specialised Care
- Post-natal Care

Overall there were mixed responses from the public around their experiences of Maternity Services, with 47% of survey respondents rating their overall experience of Maternity Services in Cardiff & Vale as 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

When asked about Maternity Services, respondents provided feedback on the following areas:

Communication & Information

Communication and information from healthcare professional to patient was on the whole reported to be good, although some patients highlighted the medical

jargon used by some healthcare professionals as being difficult to understand.

Communication from patient to healthcare professional was unfortunately not sufficient for some patients, with serious concerns being dismissed or ignored.

Unfortunately a number of respondents also reporting encountering rude members of staff.

Patient Choice

On the whole patients were understanding of the lack of choice caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, although some were financially disadvantaged by this lack of choice.

Others suffered additional distress at having to attend difficult healthcare appointments without emotional support from partners or family members.

Patient Care

A number of patients were highly complimentary of the care they received and all staff involved.

Other patients reported feeling extremely unsafe, a lack of confidence in the staff responsible for their care and distressing experiences which resulted in PTSD and patients no longer wishing to have any further children.

Introduction & Background

The South Glamorgan Community Health Council strives to hear from patients and the public across all demographics, communities, and groups within Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

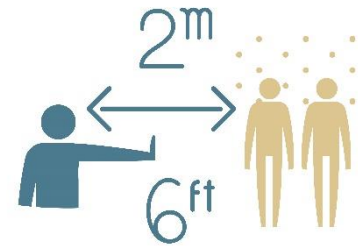
As well as requesting general feedback from the public on matters concerning their healthcare, the CHC also run specific, targeted campaigns for information and feedback from patients with specific health conditions or disabilities, or on specific services within the NHS, in order to ensure we hear from all groups of society in regards to their healthcare provision.

In this instance, the CHC wanted to hear directly from patients who had accessed NHS Maternity services, about their experiences in Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan.



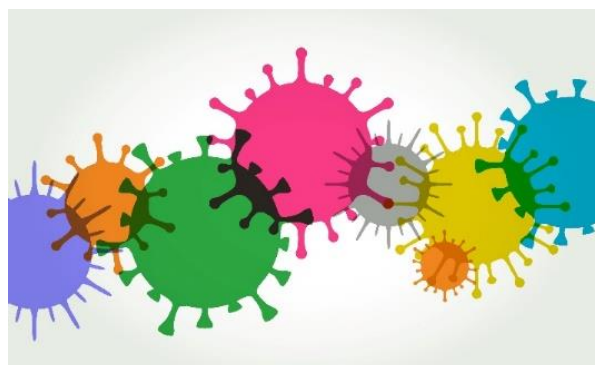
In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic caused unimaginable disruption to all aspects of everyday life, including access to Health care services.

Government restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic, around social distancing, PPE and infection control, as well as increased workforce pressures caused by sickness and self-isolation requirements, resulted in a reduction in capacity of services across the NHS.



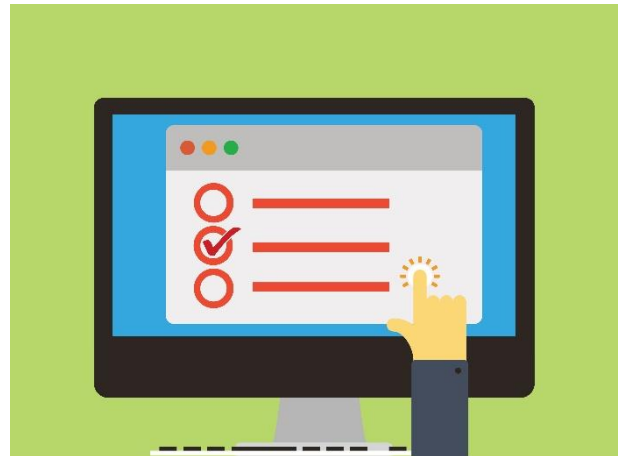
As the NHS moves from its 'Emergency Response' phase into a 'Recovery' stage following the pandemic, the CHC recognises the importance of gathering patient feedback on NHS services.

Feedback is gathered with a view to making recommendations to the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board on how to improve the experience from a patient point of view, if appropriate to do so.



What we did

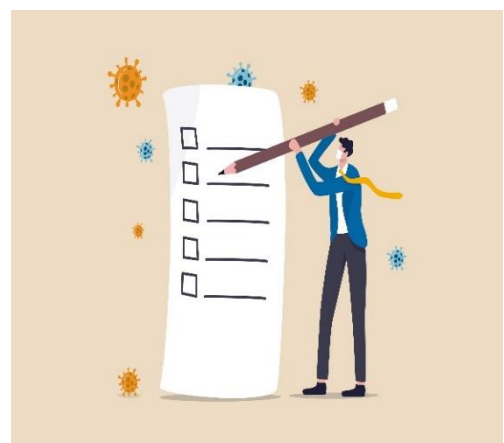
The South Glamorgan CHC devised and published an online survey to gain feedback from patients around their experiences when accessing NHS Maternity services in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.



The survey was listed on our website and publicised through our Facebook and Twitter social media channels. Details of the survey were also included within our regular stakeholder briefings. The survey was available for completion in both English and Welsh.

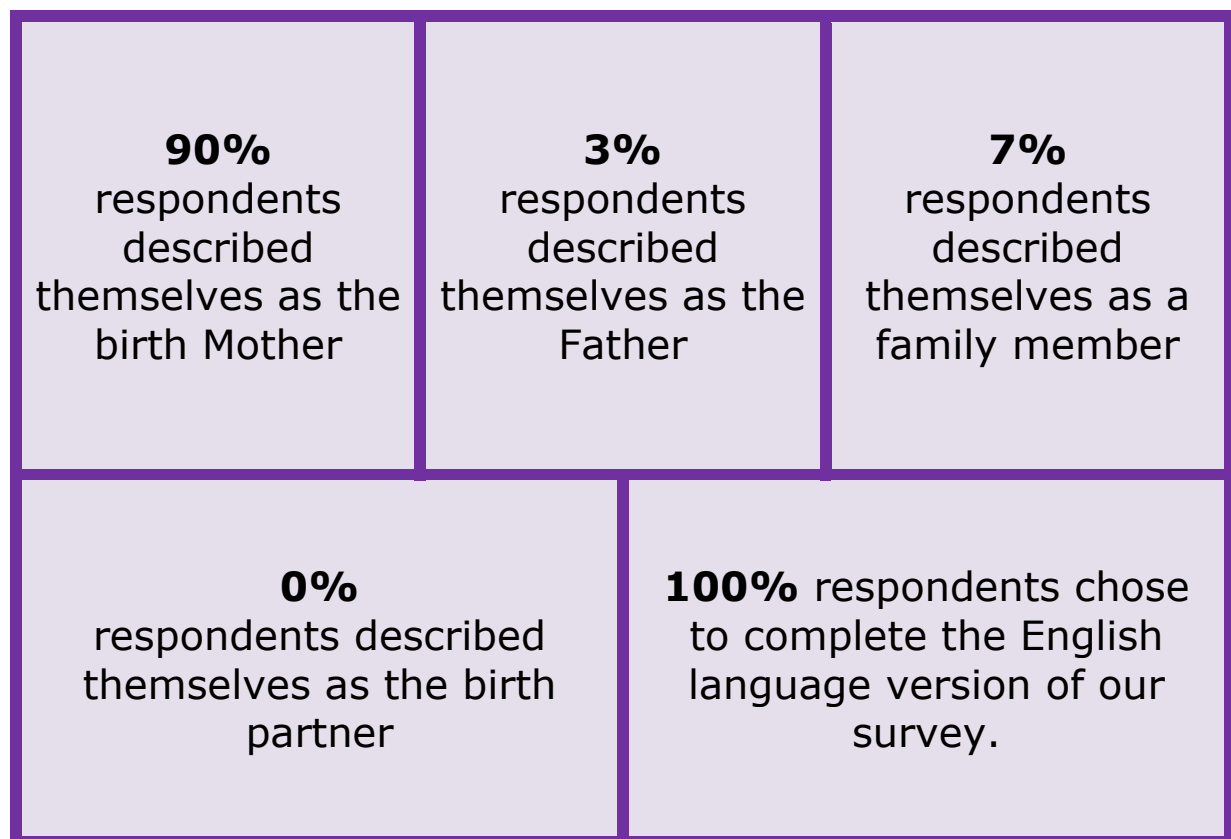
The survey was available online for completion from 1st August 2022 to 31st October 2022 and asked respondents to provide information around the following:

- ❖ Antenatal Care
- ❖ Labour and the birth of their baby.
- ❖ Specialised care for their baby
- ❖ Post-natal care



Who we are hearing from

The CHC survey was open to birth Mothers, Fathers, birthing partners and family members who have had any experience of accessing NHS Maternity Services in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.



What we heard

At a glance....

<p>20% respondents did not feel they were given enough information from their Midwife or Doctor to help them decide where to have their baby.</p>	<p>60% respondents did not feel they received enough emotional support from health care professional while their baby was in the neonatal unit.</p>	
<p>44% respondents who raised a concern during labour and birth, did not feel it was taken seriously.</p>	<p>83% respondents were spoken to in a way they could understand during labour.</p>	<p>28% respondents did not have confidence and trust in the staff caring for them during labour and birth.</p>
<p>42% respondents saw the same Midwife at every appointment during their pregnancy.</p>	<p>80% respondents were not given a choice of where their antenatal check-ups would take place.</p>	<p>37% respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with their overall experience of Maternity Services.</p>

Antenatal Care

The CHC wanted to gather feedback with regards to patients' antenatal care experiences. In this section of our survey, we asked questions around the themes of communication and information, patient choice and care.

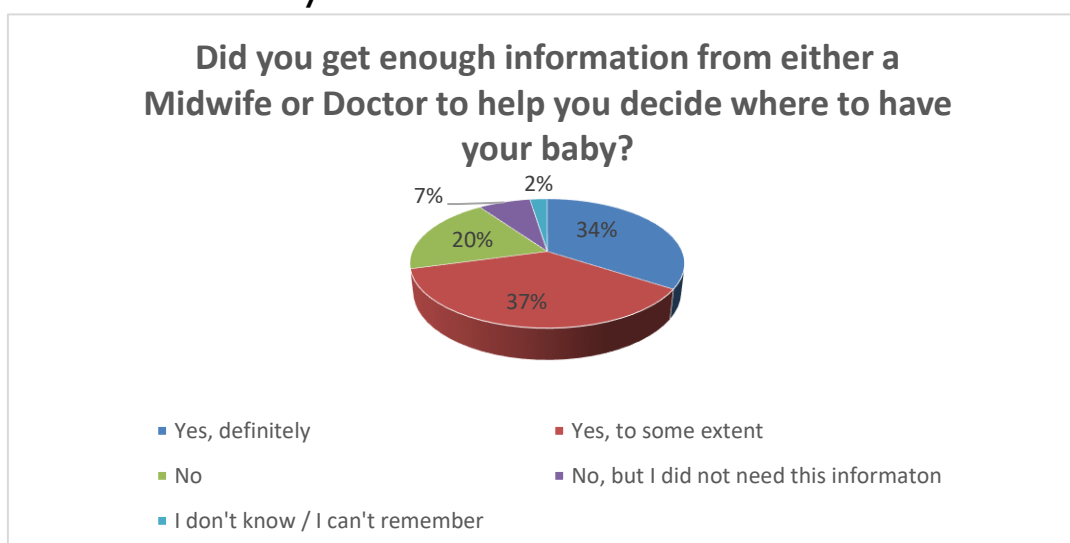


Communication & Information

It was reassuring to see that 71% of respondents reported receiving enough information from a healthcare professional in order to help them decide where to have their baby.

A further 7% of respondents reported that they did not receive enough information but also reported that did not need it.

It was disappointing to see that 20% of respondents did not feel that they received enough information from either a Midwife or a Doctor to help them decide where to have their baby.



When asked to provide additional comments on this, respondents referred to a lack of options due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a lack of knowledge of the options available, and a lack of support to obtain this information, which was especially unhelpful for first time parents.



'It was during Covid but I felt like Health Visitors barely wanted to see us and kept going 'just look online' which was not helpful when it's your first baby and there's no support'

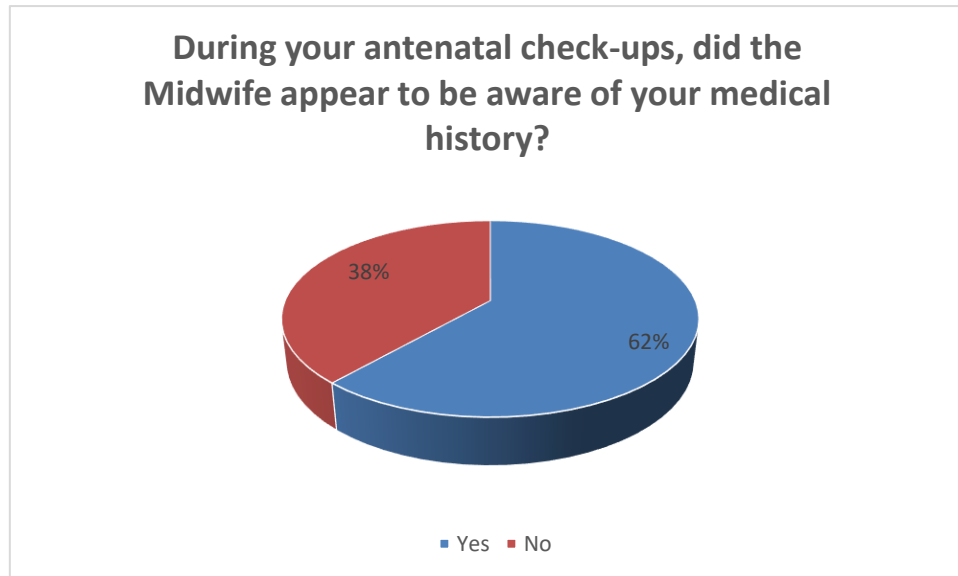
'Didn't think there was a choice of where I could have my baby.'

'Due to the COVID restrictions there wasn't really any options other than home or delivery suite.'

'You have the choice of any hospital but I wasn't aware on any of my children.'

'Home births weren't an option'

62% of survey respondents reported to the CHC that their Midwife was aware of their medical history during their antenatal check-ups.



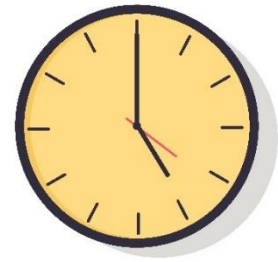
One respondent praised their Midwife as *'very thorough'*. Whilst another noted that *'more attention could have been paid to medical history of anaemia.'*

32% reported that their Midwife did not appear to be aware of their medical history, and left the following comments:

'Every appointment had to re-explain issues of hypertension and preeclampsia in last pregnancy. Appeared no effort had been made to read the notes where it had been written several times'

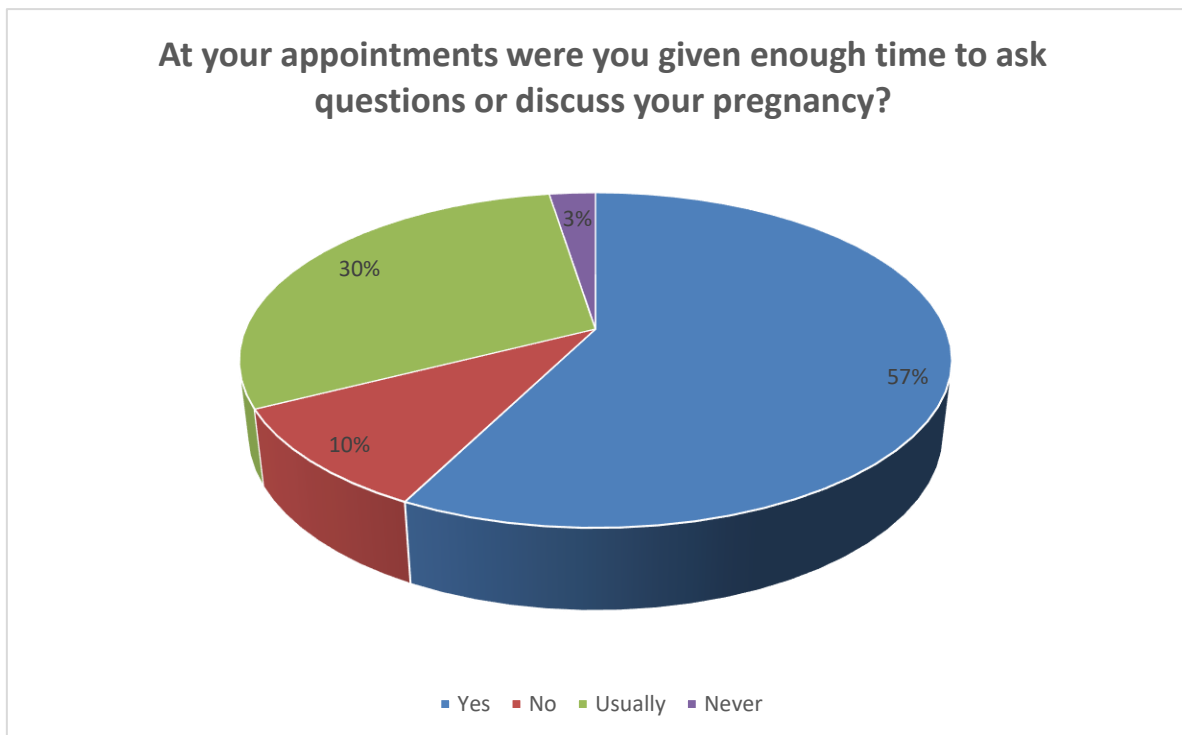
'No idea I suffered miscarriages and medical conditions, every time having to explain again because I never seen the same person.'

It was reassuring to hear from respondents that 87% felt that they were given enough time to ask questions and discuss their pregnancy during their appointments.



It was disappointing to note however that 13% respondents reported that they did not have enough time, or that they never had enough time to ask questions or discuss their pregnancy during their appointments with one stating:

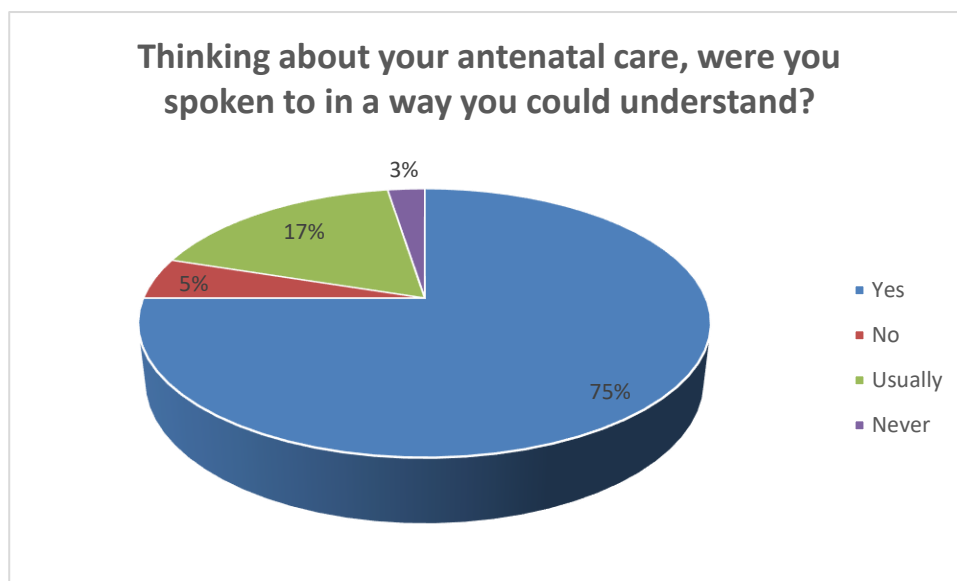
'They were too rushed to have a chat.'



Our survey also asked respondents if they were spoken to in a way they could understand.



The CHC was pleased to hear that 92% of respondents answered 'yes' or 'usually' to this question.



When given the opportunity to leave additional comments on their response to this question, both positive and negative feedback was provided. The issue of having to reiterate medical history and the distress this caused was again mentioned.

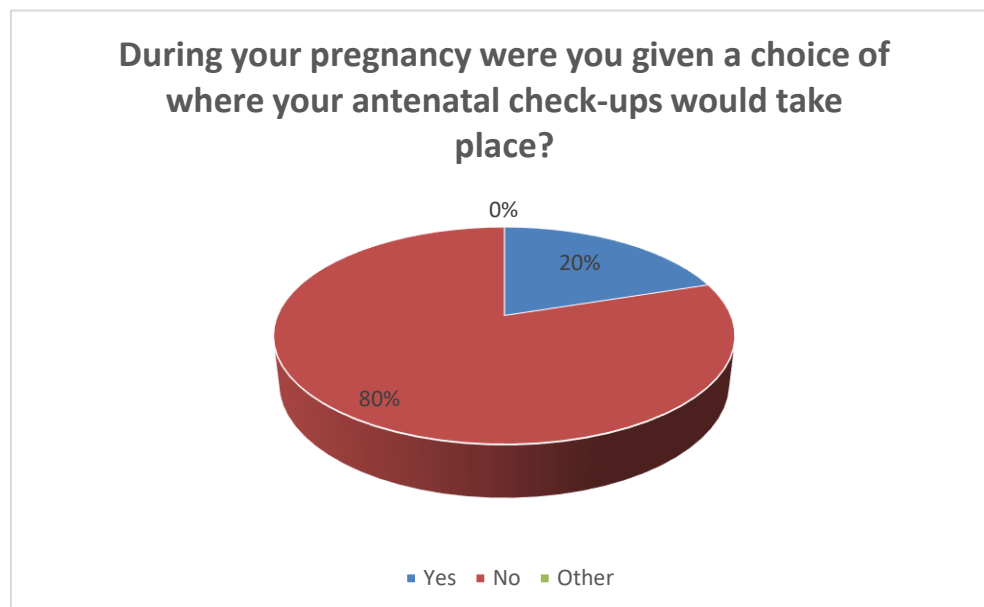
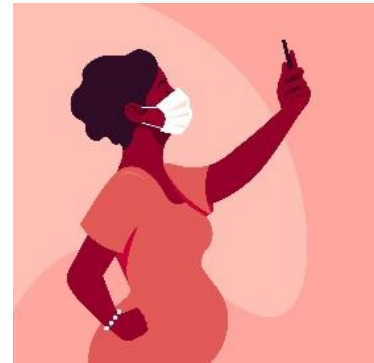
'I was by the Midwife's but not the consultants.'

'I had to explain my complex history every time which was distressing.'

'I gave the Midwife my past medical history during my booking in session. During my appointments she was able to look in my book and see the information I gave.'

Patient Choice

In response to Covid-19 pandemic, The NHS was required to make changes to the availability of patient choice in how they access NHS services and the NHS services available. The CHC recognised the importance of asking respondents to provide feedback on this, and how this impacted their experience.



80% respondents reported that they were not given a choice of where their antenatal check-ups would take place during their pregnancy.

For some patients this did not pose any issues, with one patient praising the Antenatal Unit at University Hospital Wales. Others took a pragmatic approach to the situation understanding of Covid-19 restrictions but for others the location was costly to travel to.

One patient described a distressing incident where she received news of a serious issue with her pregnancy, alone, due to the restrictions on hospital attendees.

'I was told where they would take place and these locations were not an issue for me.'

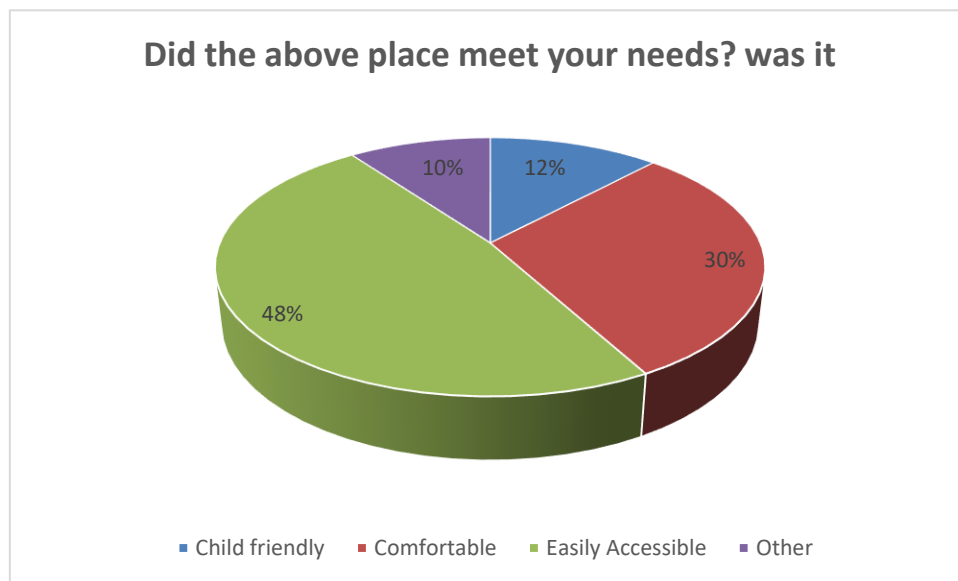
'This was because of Covid.'

'My GP surgery was convenient and I loved going to UHW antenatal, it was friendly and happy there. I got excited every time I went.'

'You get what you're given and I had to travel every week to the heath hospital for check ups and no extra money to help with travel.'

'Due to Covid restrictions my husband was not allowed to be present nor was the consideration to him being present via video call or speaker call when being told there was a serious issue with our pregnancy.'

Despite the majority of respondents not having a choice in where their antenatal check-up would take place, the vast majority of respondents (90%) described the place of their appointment as child friendly, comfortable, and / or easily accessible.



Additional comments left by some respondents suggested *'a separate waiting area or something for kids'*.

Some respondents took the opportunity to praise Maternity services stating *'Always felt listened to.'*

Whilst others were less complimentary:

'Appointments were never longer than 10 minutes. I had no idea what questions I should have been asking as it was my first child'.

'Crammed in, busy. Long waits.'

It's hard as it was Covid and first pregnancy so sometimes you didn't know what to ask and if I did ask was told look online. I had to look online to decide my birth plan instead of being talked through the options and that's hard during first pregnancy when you have no clue and no antenatal classes going on either to talk to people about options.'

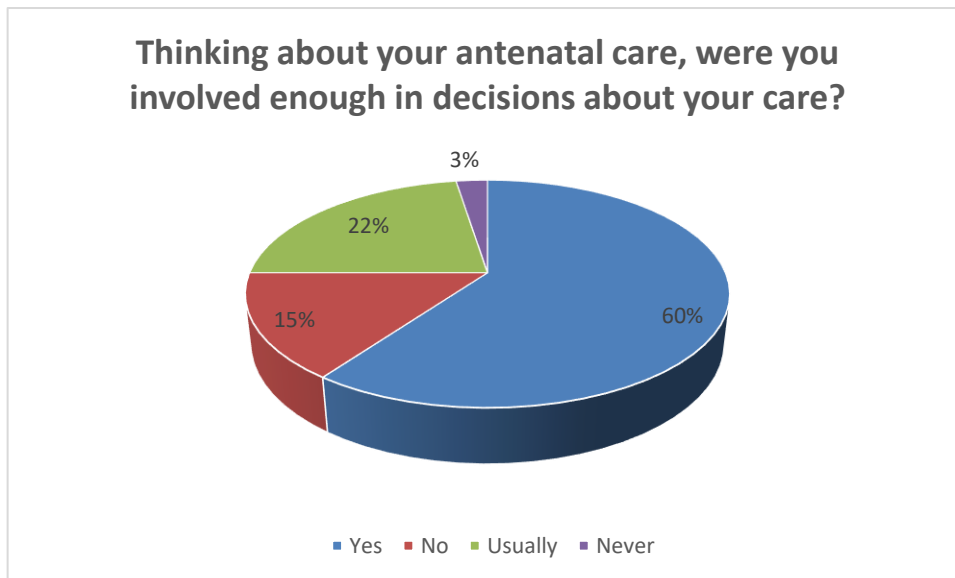
For those respondents who chose to answer 'other' to this question, a number provided the following additional information:

'Horrendous, couldn't take my other babies with me, no childcare and appointments cancelled last minute.'

'None of the above, was terrible and uncomfortable for a pregnant woman.'

'I had to keep going different places during the pregnancy. Towards the end I had to travel to Llandough hospital which was a long drive and not a lot of parking.'

82% survey respondents told the CHC that they felt they were involved enough in decisions about their antenatal care.



One respondent commented:

'I felt the advice was always keeping me and my baby safe'

Another noted despite feeling involved enough in decisions about their care, the use of medical terminology led to requests for clarification.

'Always lots of medical terms being used and often I had to ask what they meant. But sometimes it was said in a more normal way.'

Another respondent left negative feedback regarding the information they received and around the Covid-19 restrictions, despite feeling involved enough in decisions about their care.

'The Dr's were terrible at explaining and you weren't allowed to take anyone in I come out crying every time.'

Of the 18% who did not feel involved enough in decisions about their care, some provided further information on their experiences.

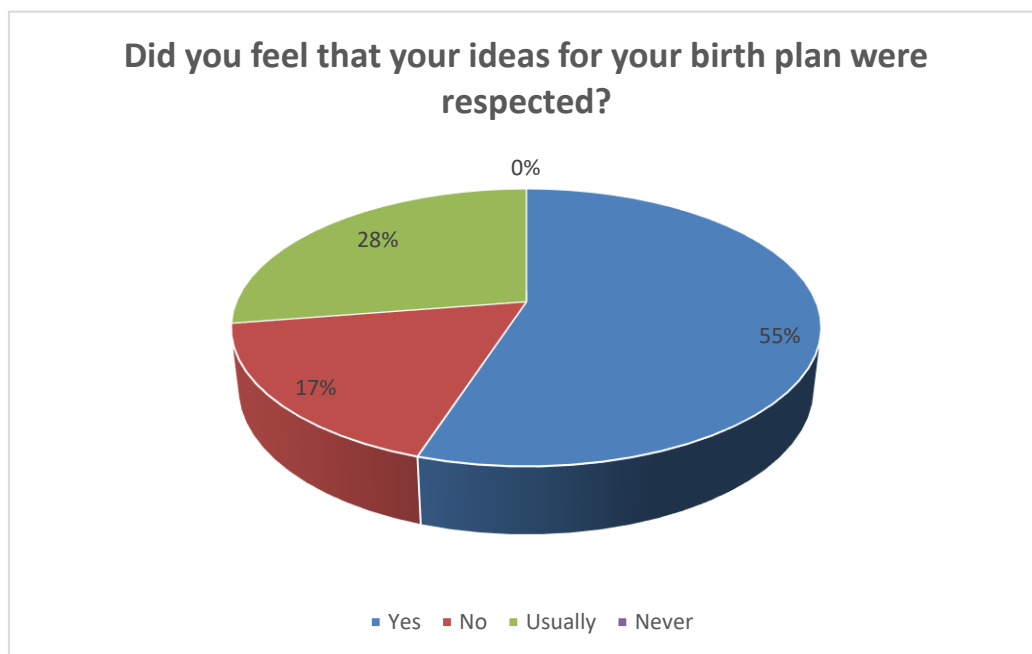
'During delivery choices were made on my behalf.'

'We transferred care from Caerphilly Borough. Our whole birth plan and monitoring was changed without prior discussion with us. We had to fight with the hospital to get an appt with consultant to find out what was going on and why things had changed.'

It was reassuring to hear that 83% of respondents reported that their birth plans were respected, or 'usually' respected.



Unfortunately for 17% of respondents that meant that they reported their birth plans were not respected.



Additional comments left by respondents in support of their response note disruptions to birth plans due to complications and busy or rude staff. Other respondents reported not having a birthing plan in the first place.

One respondent took this opportunity to report difficulties in obtaining care when suffering a UTI.

One respondent chose to leave positive feedback about the staff at the Assessment Unit in University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

'Due to mum and baby size, induction or cesarean was requested. Only induction was considered and reluctantly given after persistent requests'

'Had a UTI during my first pregnancy which became unbearable by 3pm. GP wouldn't see me so I called the Midwifery number who told me they couldn't help and my GP had to see me. Called GP back stating what I was told and they still refused me an appointment. I had to wait for the OOH to open who offered me an appointment within an hour which was great but I shouldn't have required their care.'

'Birth plan didn't go to plan due to complications.'

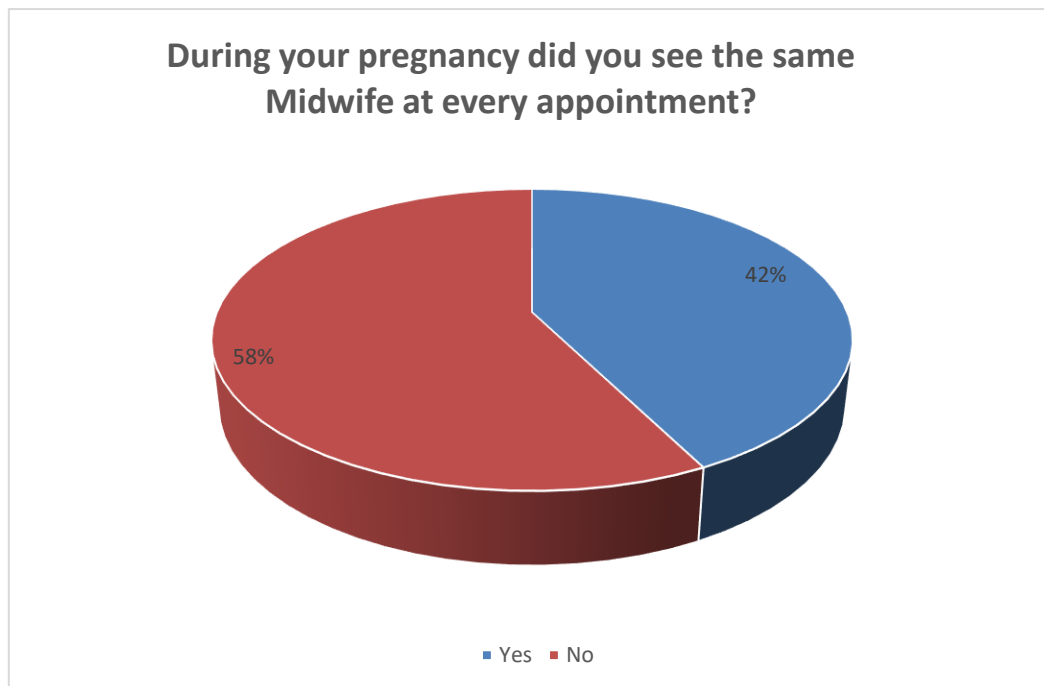
'We phoned the Midwives but they were busy and so I birthed on my own. The Midwives who turned up an hour later were amazing and very supportive.'

'I went into the assessment unit in UHW for reduced movement on the 11th October 2022 and the staff were so lovely and kind I couldn't recommend their care more.'

'Rude staff at UHW when given an appointment for reduced movement.'

Patient Care

It was reported to the CHC that 42% of survey respondents saw the same Midwife at every appointment.



'Under the ELAN team so had home visits which was great'

'Same Midwife apart from when she was on holiday or off sick.'

One respondent reported they had seen the same Midwife for every appointment but noted difficulties in contacting the Midwifery team or receiving a timely response.

'Midwife regularly didn't answer / reply to the local Midwifery contact number provided and was delayed up to 10 days if they did'

For those 58% respondents who reported not seeing the same Midwife for every appointment, experiences ranged from seeing two different Midwives throughout their pregnancy, to *'never seen the same Midwife twice'*.

'Due to annual leave I didn't see the same Midwife throughout, however I only saw 2 Midwives and maintained contact with my named community Midwife'

'We should have the same Midwife through.'

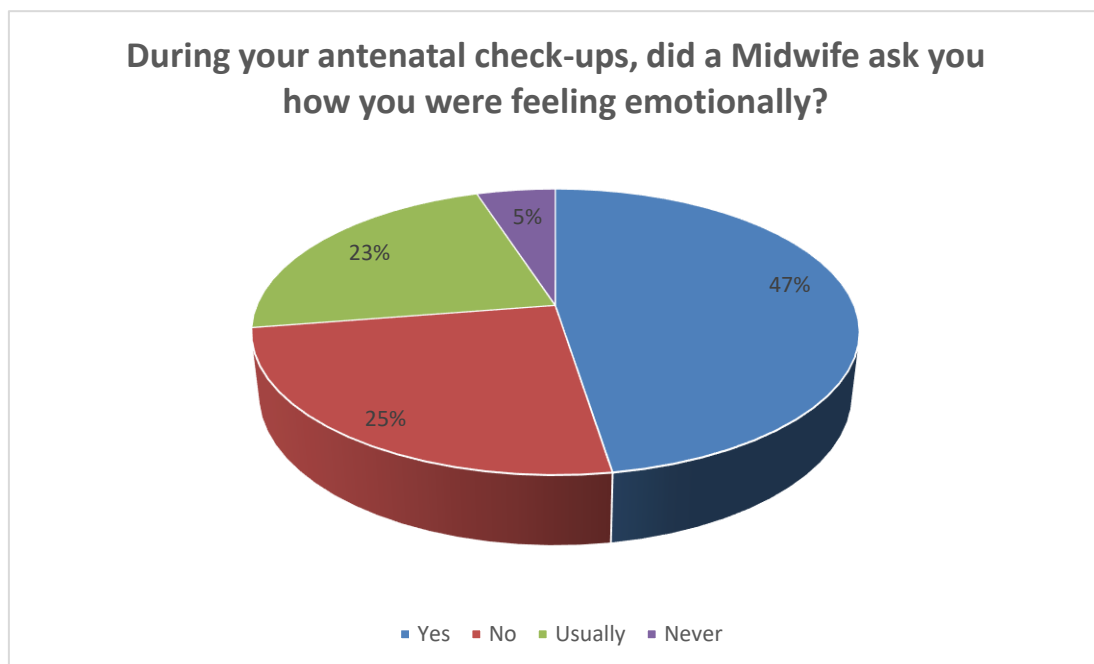
'Twice had covering Midwife for check-up appointments. One preformed a sweep at 40 weeks at GP office.'

'Never seen the same Midwife twice, they were all different.'

The CHC wanted to obtain feedback on the care patients received during their antenatal appointments and so asked respondents if Midwives enquired about the emotional wellbeing of patients during their antenatal appointments.



70% respondents answered 'yes' or 'usually' to this question. Disappointingly, 30% respondents reported that their Midwife did not ask how they were feeling emotionally during their antenatal appointments.



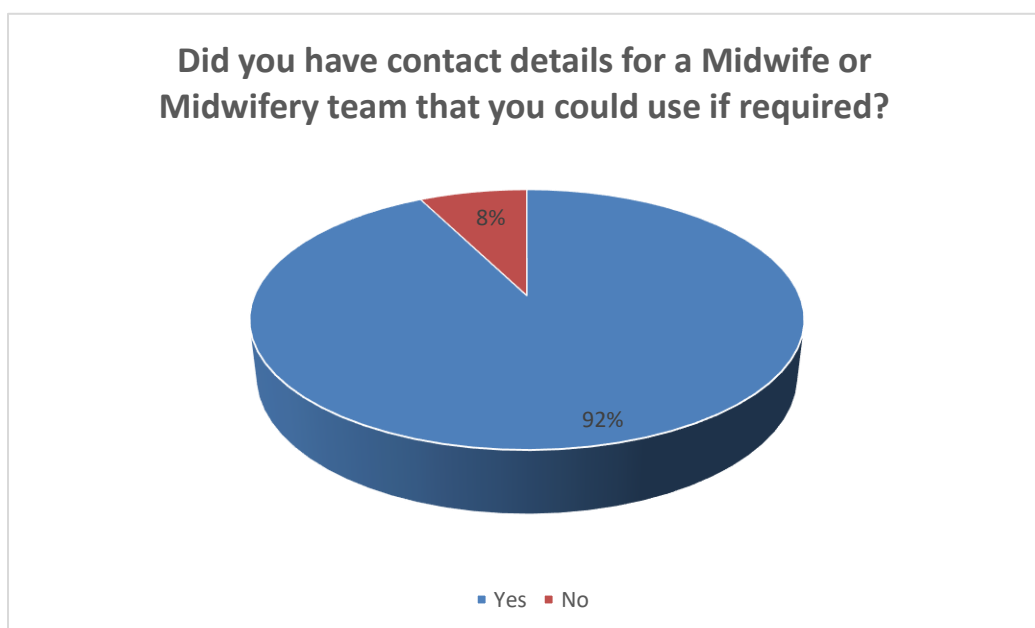
When asked to provide additional information, one patient reported an inability to contact their local Midwife, whilst another informed the CHC of a positive

experience they had with their Midwife in which they felt extremely supported during a very emotional time.

'My mother-in-law had died on the morning I was due to have a sweep. I was very emotional, the Midwife was so caring and understanding and didn't do the procedure. She was right not to but I was very upset and confused so would have gone through with it if she hadn't stepped in.'

'Only had details of my local Midwife and they never seemed to be working when I called and never got call backs to voicemails. I ended up always going to the night ward at hospital'

92% respondents confirmed that they had contact details for a Midwife, or a Midwifery team that they could use if required.



Despite having this contact information, it was reported by some respondents that they experienced difficulties in making contact with the Midwifery team, or that they felt rushed when speaking to someone.



One patient reported only having contact details for the 'Obstetric Assessment Unit'.

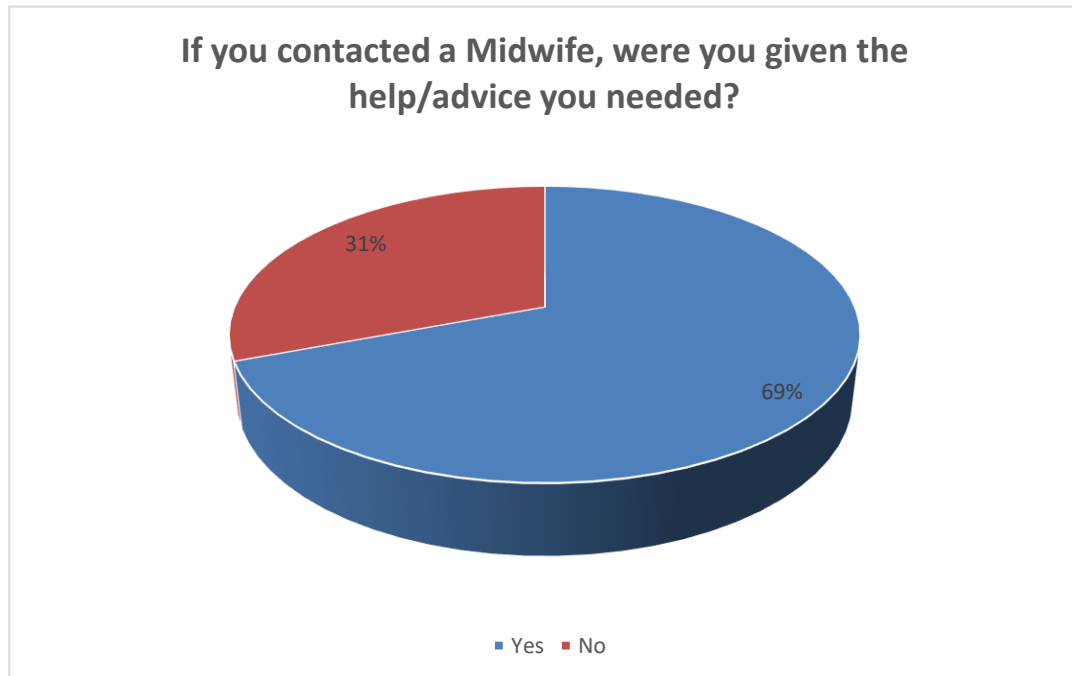
'It would take too long for calls to be answered and sometimes they didn't have the answers.'

'This part always seemed rushed and I often felt like I had to say I was fine even when I was struggling'

'Only Obstetric Assessment Unit'



69% respondents reported to the CHC that they were given the help and advice they needed when they contacted a Midwife.



A number of respondents gave praise with regards to the help and advice they received.

'Excellent service'

'Everyone I spoke to was lovely.'

'Luckily I was listened to'

Despite reporting that they received the help and advice they required when they contacted a Midwife, a number of respondents went on to share negative experiences they had suffered.

'I had an appointment with one Midwife who was not my usual Midwife at Cyncoed Medical Centre on my due date 30 Nov /1 Dec 2016. I told the Midwife I believed my waters were leaking, asked me to show pad, provided pad and advised they will check at my sweep Saturday. I requested an internal check as I felt that my waters were leaking. I was told again I would receive this Saturday (4ish days away). Was extremely upset and angry, went to Obstetrics the following evening as still did not feel right, upon internal examination my suspicions were confirmed and I had to be immediately induced.'

'Emergency c-section due to developing an infection in hospital, likely due to the induction process, not given enough supervision or checks during'

'During labour and birth I was on my own with no staff present.'

'birth plan not followed and I was given drugs that I specifically noted I did not want'

Labour and Birth

The CHC wanted to gather feedback from patients regarding Maternity services during labour and the birth of their baby. In this section of our survey, we asked respondents questions based around the themes of communication and the care that patients received during this time.

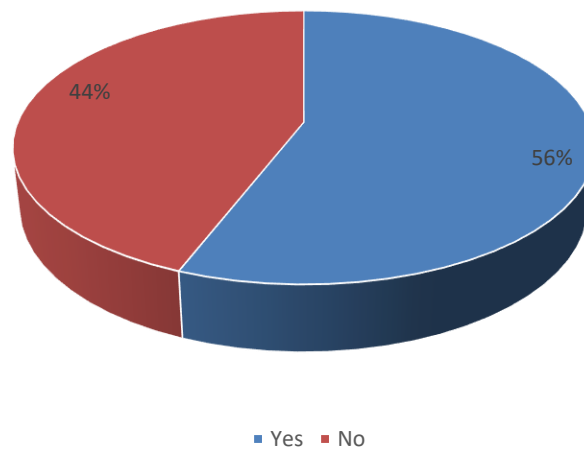
Communication

Our survey asked respondents if they raised a concern during labour and birth, did they feel that it was taken seriously.

It was extremely disappointing and concerning to the CHC that 44% respondents reported that they did not feel their concern was taken seriously.



If you raised a concern during labour and birth, did you feel that it was taken seriously?



When given the opportunity to leave additional feedback on their response to this question, patients reported that they were not being listened to when they believed there was something wrong, which subsequently turned out to be the case. Patients expressed unhappiness at not having their partner present due to Covid-19, when they felt they couldn't make an informed decision due to pain and distress. Other patients reported being made to feel 'silly' or 'like a nuisance' or gave feedback around instances where their wishes were not respected.

Words such as 'Traumatic' were used, with one respondent being so concerned for the wellbeing of herself and her baby due to the staff being 'so busy' that they contacted Women's Services. Another patient describes having to 'fight tooth and nail' for a C-Section after suffering PTSD from a previous labour.

'Baby number 2 took a long time to conceive after 5 miscarriages 5 years later he arrived, I had complications with my first labour and complications afterwards which left me suffering many years from PTSD, I opted for a C-section but I had to fight tooth and nail for it, it shouldn't be that way once you have already suffered, 2 C-sections after and a sterilisation and no complications and totally straightforward but it is hard to be heard with the Consultants and Midwives.'

'I told them I felt the baby move and pain in my back was now intense and I was struggling to use the toilet...no one seemed to care and brushed me off like a typical first timer...later it turned out my baby had turned back to back and I was now struggling with exhaustion and pain from being denied gas and air'

'I knew I was in full labour but apparently looked 'too relaxed!' It was only when the monitors were put on and the baby's heartbeat dropped through a contraction that I was rushed upstairs. Having said that, I expressed how anxious I was before the monitors and the staff allowed me to stay, rather than sending me home.'

'I was induced, alone, as my partner had Covid and wasn't allowed to be with me. I was in a lot of pain very quickly. Staff did come when I pressed the buzzer, but I felt like I was being a nuisance. I was offered a form of pain relief (can't remember what) but I didn't feel like I was in a position to make an informed decision about it as I was in so much pain and quite distressed.'

'My plan had to change due to a pregnancy issue it was made clear to me that I didn't really have a choice as to how it was going to happen and I was made to feel like it was silly of me to think I would have a natural birth'

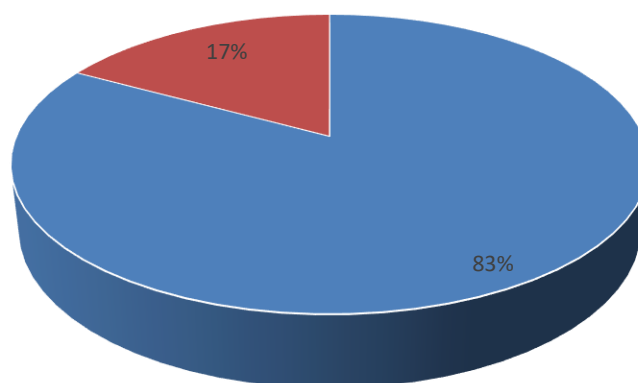
'When talking about home birth the Midwife explained the process. She spoke about 'some women' who don't want the Midwife involved and want them to wait in another room and generally be hands off. She was very negative about this and made me feel uncomfortable as this is the type of birth I wanted. I felt my wishes should be respected but if she had been at my birth I was worried she would go against them.'

'I noted that there were things that I definitely did not want but these were ignored during labour'

'I was induced and something felt wrong with the pessary I asked to have it removed and another placed if needed but I was told no'

The CHC was reassured to hear that 83% respondents reported that they were spoken to in a way that they could understand when receiving care during their labour.

Thinking about your care during labour, were you spoken to in a way you could understand?



■ Yes ■ No

The CHC was disappointed to hear from a number of patients about negative experiences they suffered during labour.

Patients again informed the CHC of instances of healthcare staff dismissing concerns and reported staff being stressed due to staffing shortages and feeling 'ignored'.

'I was just huffed at and stabbed in the leg with pethadine...blood was left running down my thigh as the Nurse walked out. My mum cleaned me up.'

'During labour of my first pregnancy I told the Midwife the baby was pushing against my ribs during contractions, the pain was unbearable but I was told it was just the contractions. I've since suffered with my rib dislocating regularly and having given birth again I know the pain and sensation of my rib being broken was not just the contractions. I should have been listened to and offered assistance not dismissed as though I was overreacting.'

'Midwife was clearly stressed due to the lack of staff. Upon arrival to the hospital 'sorry we're very short staffed, lots of us off on the sick due to stress' this didn't exactly fill us with confidence'

'Waters broke and sent home, came in after contractions began. Was in labour for hours, delivery Midwife wasn't very communicative, this our first pregnancy. Had terrible trouble with the foetal monitors during natural birth process, coming off all the time and Midwife wasn't bothered.'

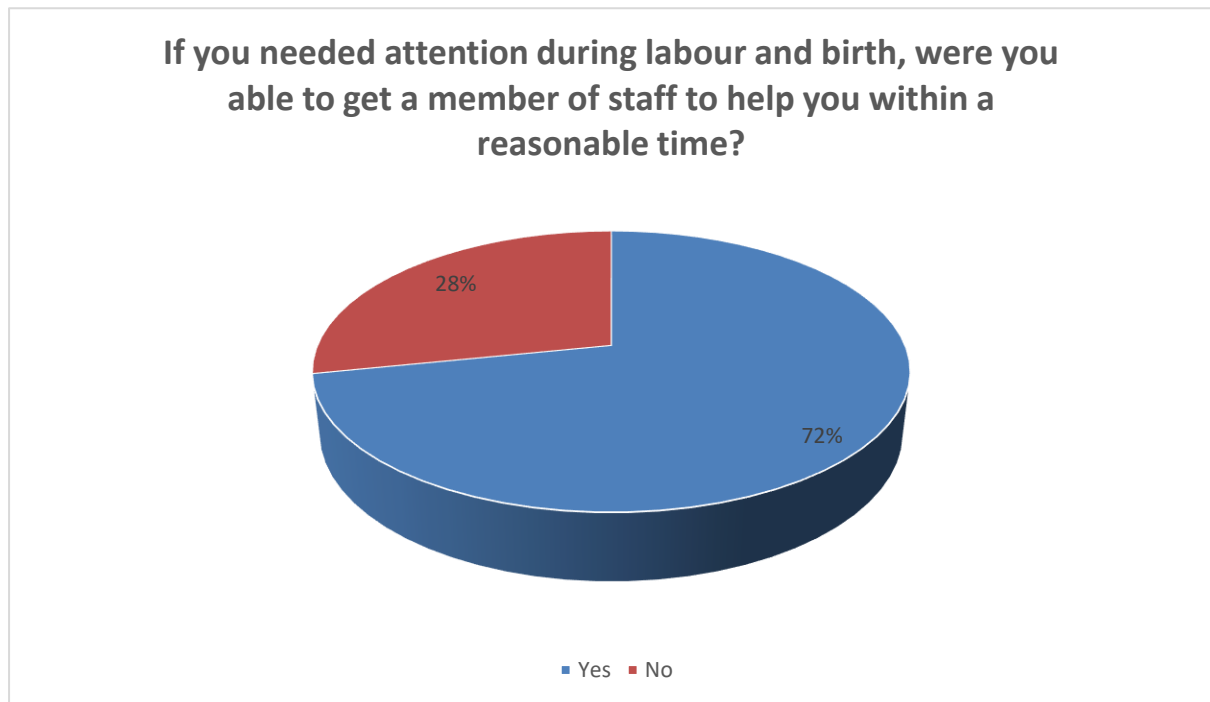
'Ignored throughout my whole induction'

'Daughter in law sent home in severe snow conditions after hours of slow labour.'

'The on-call consultant luckily knew my case and care plan had they not I and my baby would have been in trouble'

Patient Care

It was of concern to note that 28% of respondents informed the CHC that if they needed attention during labour and birth, they were not able to get a member of staff to help them within a reasonable time.



When given the opportunity to provide additional information around their response, there was a mix of both positive and negative feedback provided.

'I asked to see a Doctor after being told I needed a medical induction on the Friday due to deceleration of baby's heartbeat for a sustained time. I asked over 30 times distressed and upset and no Doctor came for 72 hours which was confirmed when I requested my notes'

'The final Midwife who came to see me was great and offered me gas and air, and examined me when she realised I was quite far along. I was basically fully dilated before I could get anyone to examine me or take my pain seriously.'

'Our second child we insisted on c-section- all went fine. Still living today with trauma of the first delivery and a child that will never succeed or have a fulfilling life for themselves.'

'The staff were fantastic and always made time to answer my questions and provide reassurance'

'In certain aspects yes and others, no'

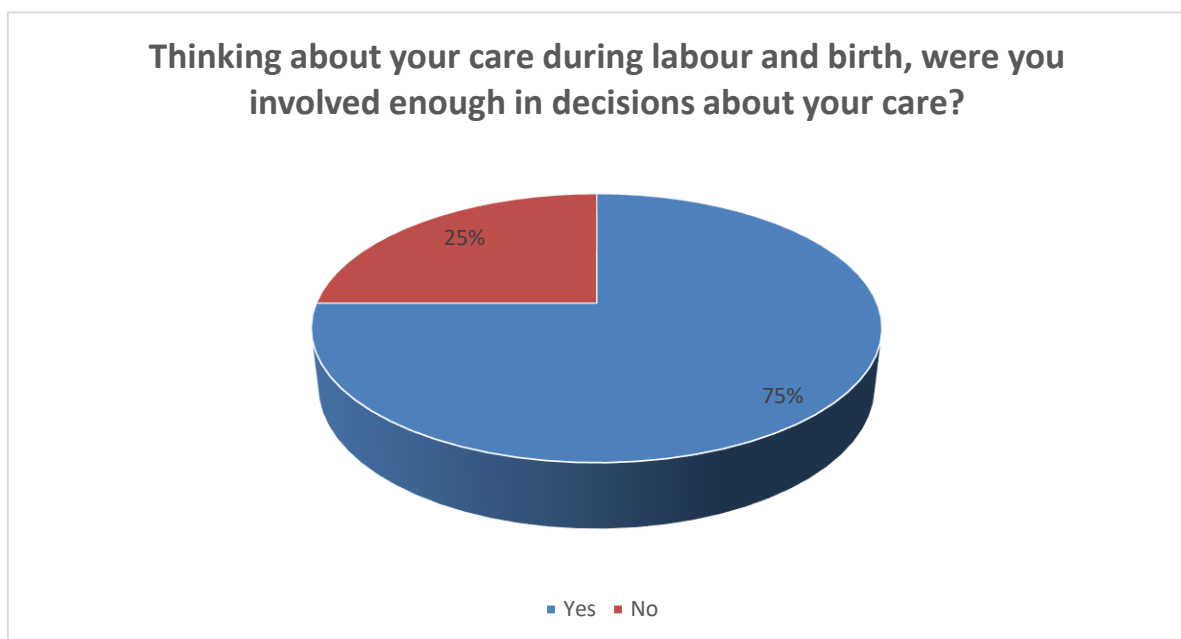
'During labour yes on the induction ward, No'

'Hooked up to monitor after a while so had Midwife in room constantly.'

The CHC asked respondents 'Thinking about your care during labour and birth, were you involved enough in decisions about your care?'

75% respondents answered 'yes'

25% respondents answered 'no'



Respondents provided the following additional comments following their responses above.

'I did want an epidural but it was far too late by the time anyone realised how far along my labour was. I was induced at 9am and told I needed to wait until 3pm to be examined. My daughter was born at 2.12pm.'

'It was a very very quick labour and they were great, the only thing I wish was that I was given an episiotomy earlier as there was no way I'd push her out without it and they kept telling me to push or I'll have to go upstairs for assisted delivery as baby was stressed but I couldn't get her out without it'

'I was on the Obstetric ward being monitored Midwives always came in s timely manner even when under extreme pressure and low staffing'

'I birth very quickly so I feel this was out of their hands. The Midwives were busy and my partner stressed I birth quickly. They said they would phone back but I gave birth within 20 minutes.'

'Staff too busy, concerns were brushed aside'

It was concerning to the CHC that 28% of survey respondents reported that they did not have confidence and trust in the staff caring for them during their labour and birth.



Reasons given by respondents for their negative response include being left alone by medical staff, medical staff dismissing concerns or speaking to patients using medical terms they couldn't understand. One patient felt so unsafe they do not want have another baby.

'It was so busy they weren't able to help me and it was a horrible situation it's put me off having another one as I felt so unsafe.'

'I was refused an examination and when my partner got help he was asked if he thought I was 'pushing' and still no examination was completed'

'Was never listened to by the Midwife at the birth, dismissed me when I said I felt babies head and I was right, traumatic experience.'

The birth was fine but the labour was not great as I was alone and scared for several hours.

'Unfortunately the Doctor spoke very quickly using med terms and due to her accent it was very difficult to understand what was happening'

'Not baby 1 when I gave birth naturally in the birthing pool'

For those who expressed trust and confidence in the staff caring for them during labour and birth, they left additional feedback praising the staff involved in their care. The Delivery Suite at University Hospital Wales was commended by one respondent who described the care they received as 'outstanding', whilst another reported being 'reassured'.

'Fab team'

'Delivery suite at UHW were excellent. Care provided was outstanding.'

'everyone involved in my labour were genuinely amazing'

'I was reassured by those around me'

During labour yes, on the induction ward no

'No staff present during labour but after birth I was treated respectfully. The two Midwives who attended were wonderful and explained everything to me.'

Specialised Care

12% of survey respondents reported that their baby spent time in the Neonatal Unit after birth. The CHC wanted to gather more feedback around their experiences.

A number of patients reported having to wait for pain relief following requests to medical staff.

It was also noted by a number of patients that staff on the ward appeared 'very busy' and patients experienced long waits to see staff.



Some patients stated they struggled to get help from staff when needed or felt like they were 'bothering them'.

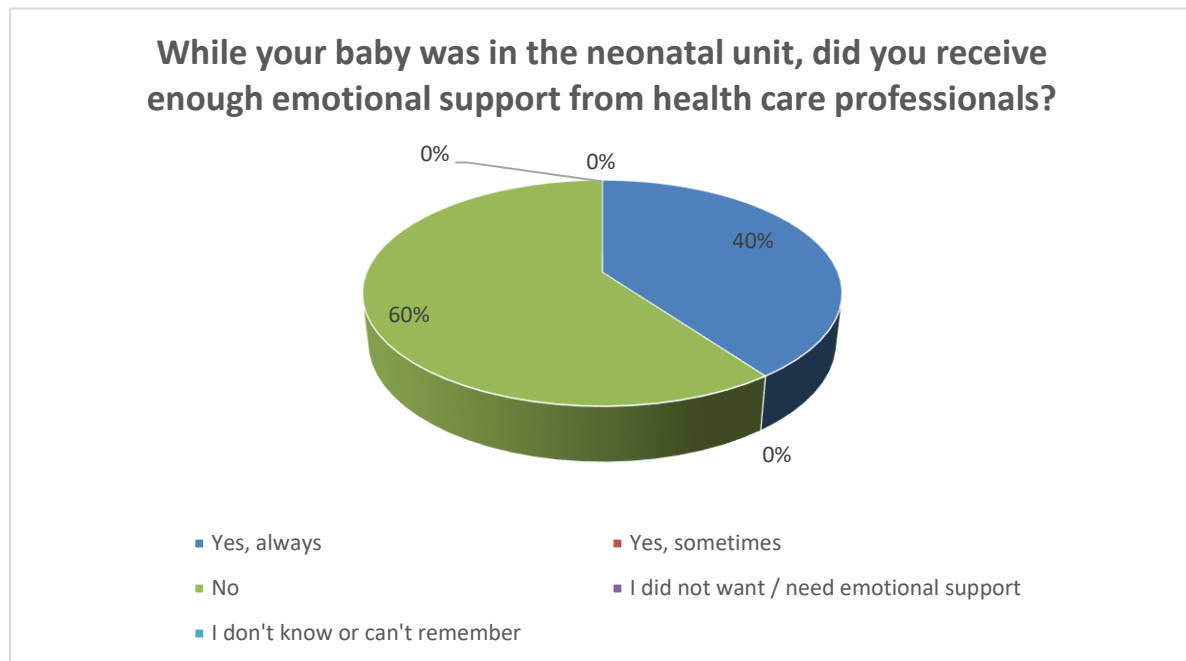
'When I was in recovery on the ward it took staff a long time to come to see me and because I was spending time seeing my baby in nicu they were dismissive of my pain as I wasn't coming back for pain relief and the reason was because my baby was 8.5 weeks early and i was worried and that was my priority so when I came back to the ward they dismissed my pain'

'It felt like the staff on the ward were very busy and sometimes had to wait a long while for someone to come. Took 2 hours for pain killers when requested. Was offered help to bath my baby but then was not followed up. Cleaning staff knew before me that I was being discharged.'

'All too busy chatting when you did ask for help (after they acknowledge you once there convo is over) it was always made to feel like your bothering them'

'Staff were very busy and hard to get hold of. Requested pain killers multiple times before actually being given any. Was told I wasn't allowed to leave my baby alone to go to the toilet as she didn't have a tag bracelet on but struggled to get a staff member to look after her while I went.'

Disappointingly, 60% respondents reported that they did not receive enough emotional support from healthcare professionals while their baby was in the Neonatal Unit.



Some patients praised the staff involved in their care noting them to be *'respectful'*. Other respondents had mixed experiences over the duration of their labour or reported a poor experience.

***'Induction no.
Labour yes'***

***'Midwife
was
excellent'***

***'Confidence was
reducing over the
hours, we were not
given the care we
should have had'***

'Staff arrived after birth but helped as I needed stitches etc. Very respectful and I felt I was involved in all decisions.'

'On the delivery suite yes we did, both Midwives were lovely and attentive. Midwives / Nurses on Induction ward were very confusing and had to keep repeating to new staff pain and issues etc. staff on post C-section (initially ward straight after) were inattentive. Having called and asked for a sick bowl nobody came and as a result was sick over myself, they then arrived and said there was a bowl on the side (out of reach and I couldn't feel my legs to get out of bed to get it.) no food was offered and having asked for a clean cape having been sick on it I was told they didn't have any spare and I'd have to wait.'

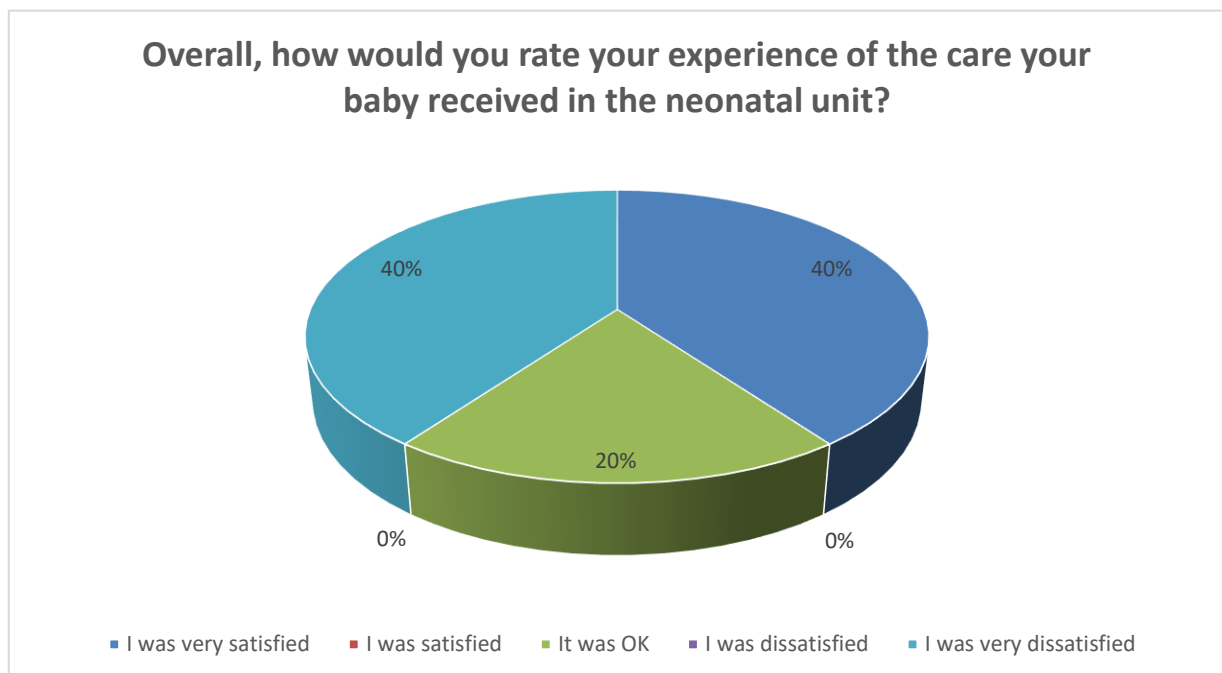
'surgical socks that were too tight were put on my legs and nearly caused clots as they cut off circulation to me feet'

The CHC asked respondents to rate their experience of the care their baby received in the Neonatal Unit.



Unfortunately, only 40% of respondents rated their experience as being 'very satisfied' with a further 20% rating their experience as 'OK'.

The remaining 40% of survey respondents rated their experience as being 'very dissatisfied'.



One dissatisfied patient went on to leave the following additional feedback:

'Oxygen depravation at birth, required crash team to restart heart and continual help with breathing, multiple seizures after. We were on neonatal for 6 weeks.'

Another patient noted a lack of communication around the progress of her baby which was why they rated their experience as 'OK'.



'Baby was only there for a short while for checks. However, I wasn't really kept informed about his progress and when he was returned to me he had a tube in his nose but no one explained why.'



Post-natal Care

The CHC wanted to gather feedback from patients regarding post-natal Maternity Services in Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan. In this section of our survey, we asked respondents questions based around the themes of communication and information, patient choice and the care that patients received during this time.

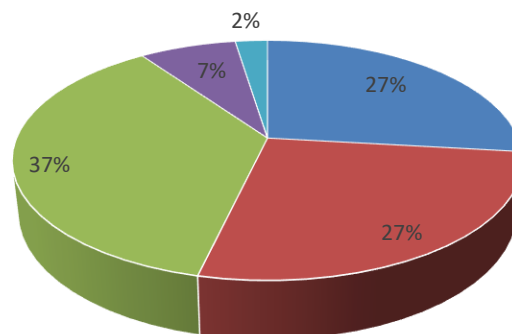
Communication & Information

The CHC asked respondents whether they had a Healthcare professional they could talk to about their worries and fears after the birth.

54% of respondents answered 'yes, always' or 'yes, sometimes' to this question.

Unfortunately 37% respondents reported that they did not have a healthcare professional they could talk to about their worries and fears after the birth.

Thinking about the care you received after the birth, did you have a Health Care professional that you could talk to about your worries and fears?



■ Yes, always ■ Yes, sometimes ■ No ■ I had no worries or fears ■ I don't know or can't remember

Additional comments provided praise Health Visitor staff for their support. Others felt completely unsupported or referenced instances where they felt staff were very dismissive of their worries. Lack of continuity of care from the same staff members was also noted.

'ALL support received was from the local HV and not Midwifery or GP team. A lot of issues medically would not have been treated or resolved without interjection from the HV'

'The Health Visitors were great'

'No staff'

'Left alone for the most part. Did not feel emotionally or mentally supported at all especially as my husband was not allowed to visit due to Covid.'

'After the birth on recovery, my baby was in a clear crib on the other side of the room, I couldn't get to him when he cried as I'd had a spinal block...the buzzer to alert a Nurse was above me and I couldn't reach...I was forced to shout for someone.'

'There was one Midwife that I felt listened but that's only because she knew me from my admissions during pregnancy'

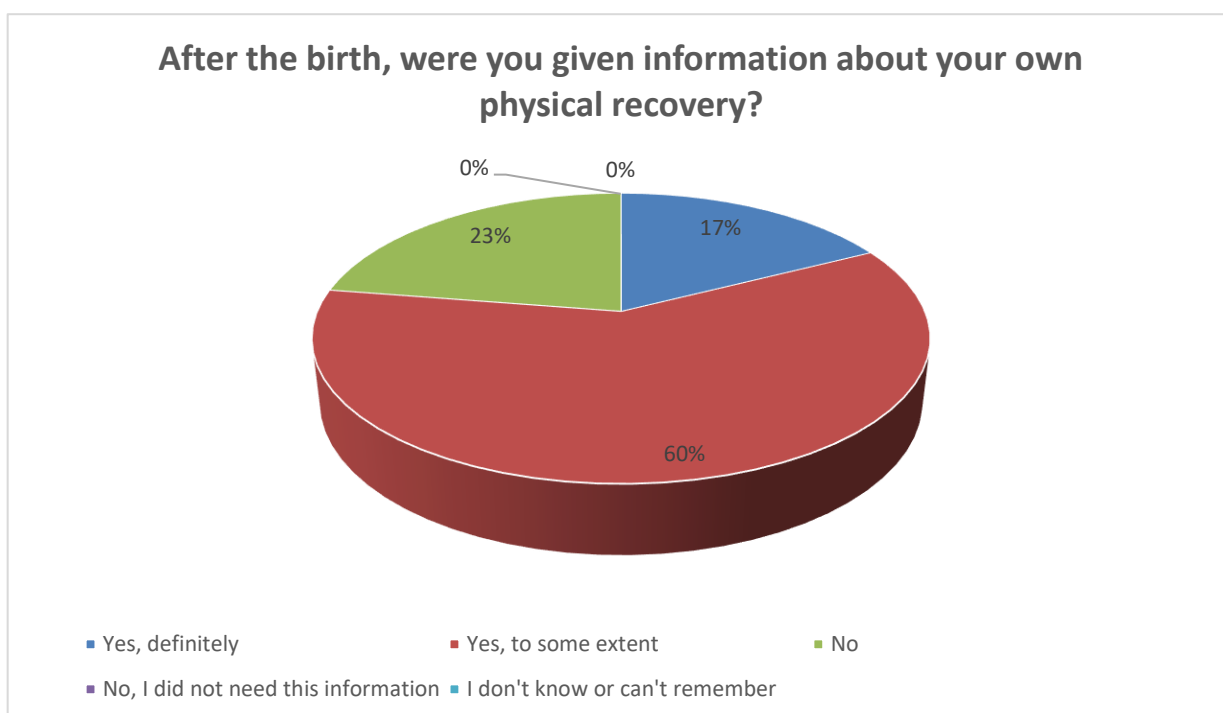
'One staff member was very helpful and listened to my worries about breastfeeding etc the rest were very dismissive because I was a second time mum despite breastfeeding not being able to be established the first time round due to baby having an NICU stay.'

'Different Healthcare professionals turned up at the house each day. I never seen the same staff member twice.'

'This wasn't discussed'

Our survey also asked respondents if they were given information about their own physical recovery following the birth.

77% of respondents answered 'yes, definitely' or 'yes, to some extent' to this question. The remaining 23% responded 'no'.



Feedback provided around this question noted that often the after-birth care revolved around the baby, not the mother.

In other cases, patients were only provided a leaflet on exercise, given information on breastfeeding or information on Physiotherapy appointments.

One patient noted an incident where another healthcare professional had to speak up on their behalf before their injuries following birth were taken seriously. Another referenced a negative experience when contacting University Hospital of Wales to request a follow-up appointment.

'my physical injuries were extensive and were not taken seriously until HV stepped in and still not fully resolved'

'This was around physio - just telling me I'd have appointments now for the episiotomy'

'After birth care from whomever was 99% of the time about the baby.'

'My natural birth too longer to recover than 2 c-sections.'

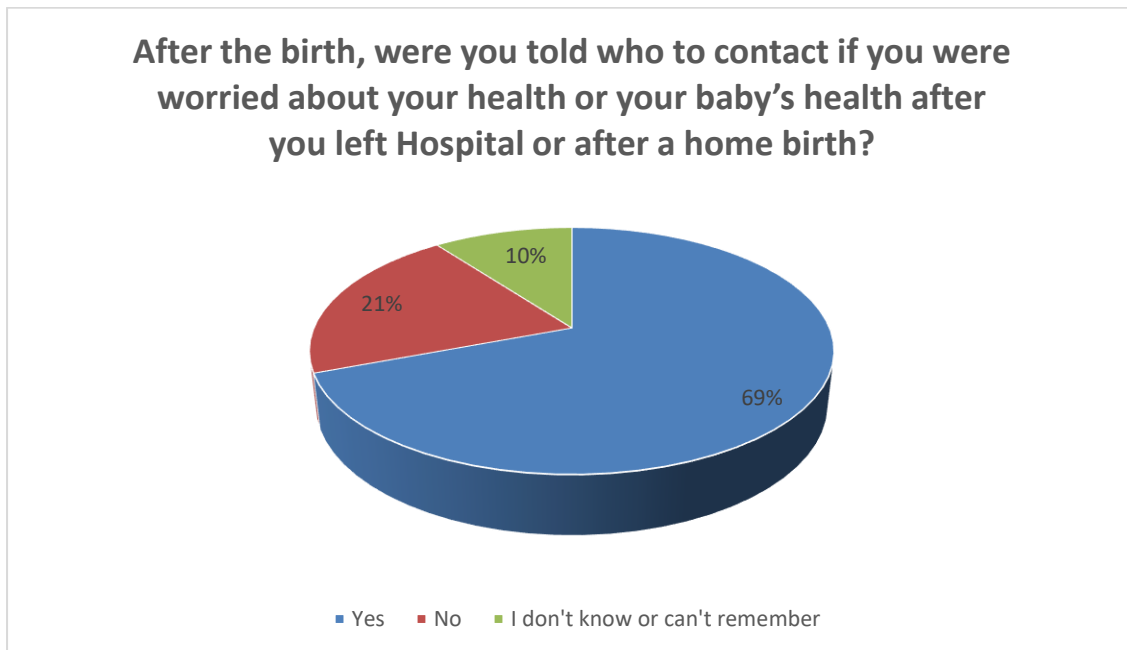
'Mainly told to just rest I can't massively remember. Most information given was about breastfeeding'

'Phoned UHW in tears as I was having a reaction to epidural and was made to feel guilty for requesting an appointment which would mean I'd miss a 'very important' breast feeding support appointment'

'A leaflet on exercise and that was it!'



69% survey respondents confirmed that they were told who to contact if they were worried about their, or their baby's health after they left the hospital or following a home birth.



Of those 69% a number left additional information around their experiences. It was noted that information given was '*conflicting*'. Other patients again referenced a difficulty in understanding the information that was being given to them.

'A lot was conflicting. Especially within the first week'

'I was not Midwife led was Consultant led and it was terrible couldn't make any sense even when asked to explain it again didn't know how my baby was going to come out'

Of the 21% who were not given information on who to contact after the birth if they were worried about their or their baby's health, one respondent chose to report that they have suffered negative experiences with Midwives and care staff for over 13 years.

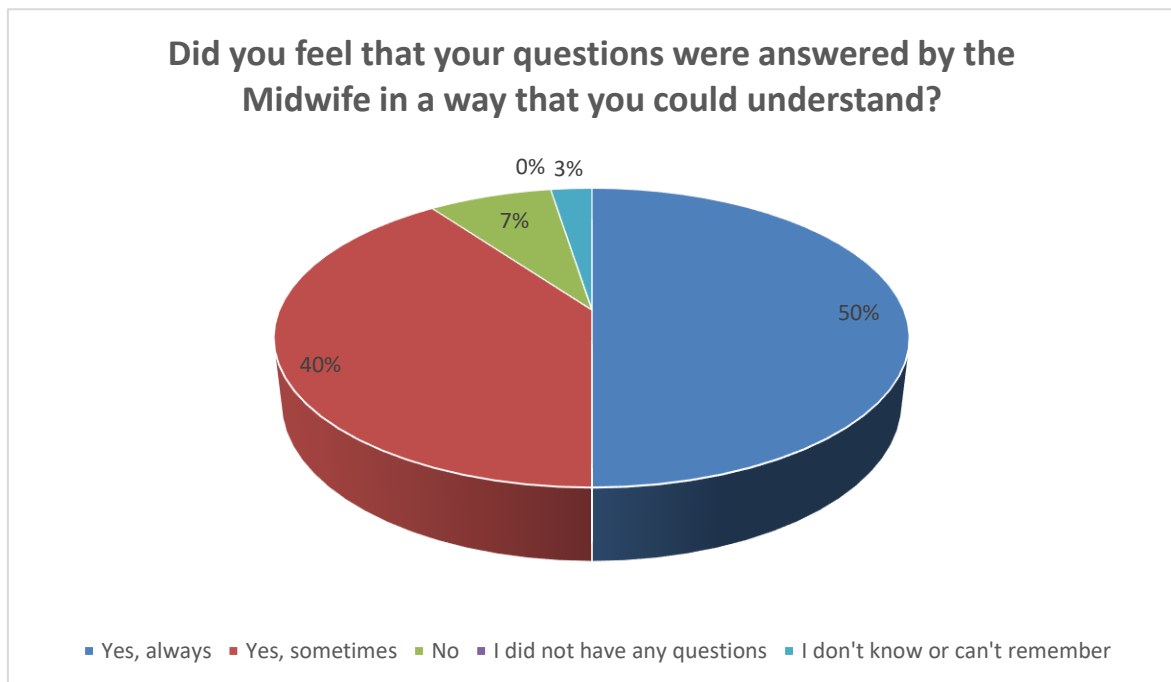
'Midwives and care staff are horrendous all 3 times in a space of 13.5 years, my latest being just 4 months old.'

Another patient who could not remember if they had been given this information or not, expressed how helpful their GP had been following birth, but was not as complimentary about their Midwife.

'My GP visited me at home and was far more helpful than the Midwife following my discharge from hospital'

50% survey respondents confirmed that their questions were always answered by their Midwife in way that they could understand.

40% responded 'yes, sometimes' with a further 3% answering 'don't know or can't remember'.



Additional feedback left following this question again reference no consistency of care due to seeing different staff at each appointment. Patients noted inconsistent advice given to them by each different healthcare professional seen.

One patient reported a lack of understanding and support from staff until their GP stepped in, describing the experience as 'appallingly stressful'.



Advice given was said to be non-specific to their child, with no mental wellbeing care provided.

'Different advice from every Healthcare professional seen'

'This was a different Midwife every time. No consistency.'

'A lot was so conflicting, straight out the book etc and not specific to my child and no care for my mental wellbeing'

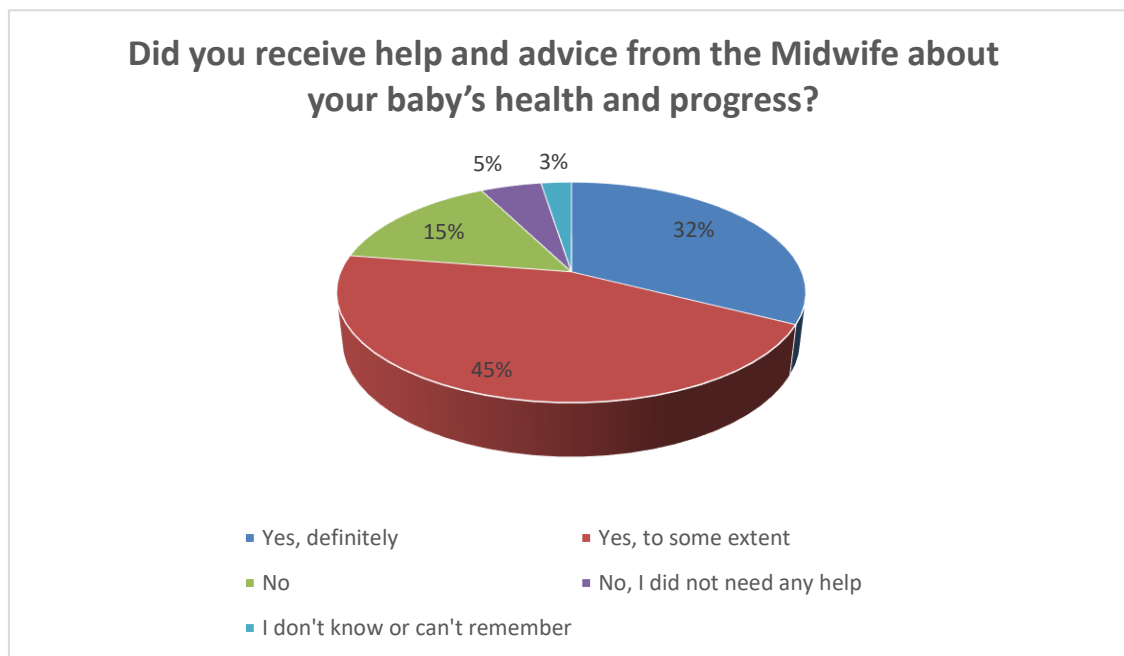
'All the staff kept going on about was breastfeeding. I was struggling with it. I was really unwell and exhausted and yet they kept on and on. It made me even more unwell. My GP took control on my discharge, said enough is enough and we put my baby onto bottled formula. I then felt better. It was an appallingly stressful start as a mum and I am still very saddened by it.'

***'With the nicu team definitely
With my care not always'***

The CHC enquired as to whether survey respondents felt they received help and advice from their Midwife about their baby's health and progress.



77% responded 'yes, definitely' or 'yes, to some extent'. With a further 8% stating they did not need help, or they can't remember.



Despite the positive responses left, there was still negative feedback shared. Patients informed the CHC that checks on the mother were poor, with their GP concentrating on their baby. Others were unable to book check-up appointments, with others only being offered telephone consultations following a C-Section.

One patient informed the CHC that the way they were spoken to by healthcare professionals left them feeling like they *'were being accused of neglecting her or something'*

'She was slow to gain weight and was put on a feeding plan, but the way we were spoken to about it was really not helpful. It felt like we were being accused of neglecting her or something, when really she was being very sick after every feed. I was exhausted from being up with her all night and felt like I was being accused of being lazy for my reluctance to pump and give extra bottles after every feed.'

'Telephone consultation saying I didn't need to be seen so no-one checked my c-section recovery from 10 days'

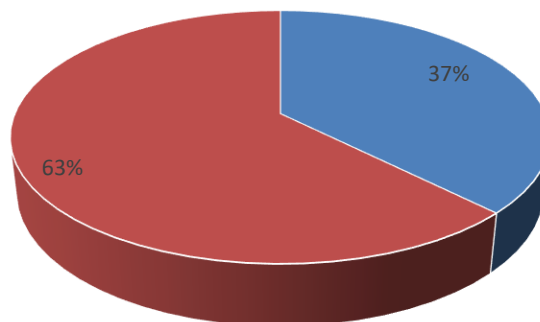
'Tried to book a check-up but was unable to and told if I had no concerns then everything was okay.'

'No post-natal check-up done'

'GP concentrated on baby. Poor maternal health check.'

It was disappointing to learn that 63% of survey respondents do not know how or where to give feedback or make a complaint about their care if they wished to do so.

Thinking about your overall care, if you wanted to give feedback or make a complaint, did you know how and where to do so?



■ Yes ■ No

When offered the opportunity patients shared their feedback and concerns.

'Lack of staffing resulted in a 5 hour wait to be assessed in assessment unit. I was 5cms with back to back labour when finally assessed.'

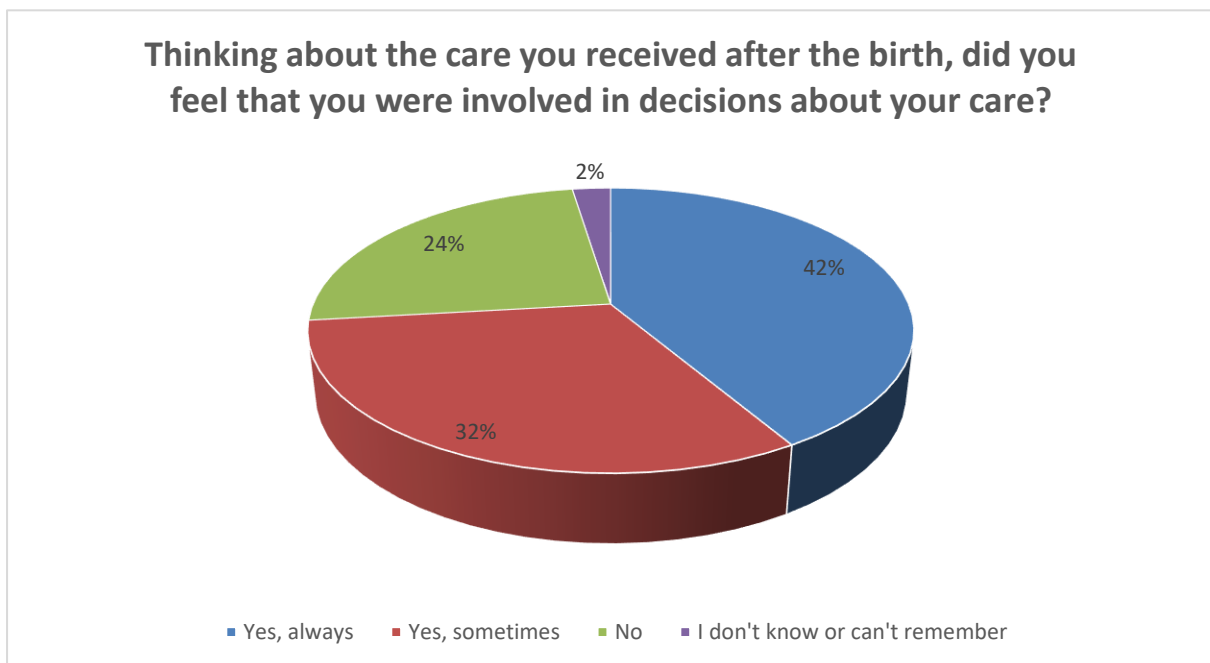
'Still don't understand why I was left to labour for so long. Was told baby needed to be born 24 hours after waters went as they went before contractions started, baby arrived 54 hours later. Both ended up on IV antibiotics post birth.'

'I had Covid and so did my partner, but he was not allowed to be present for the birth or to visit us in hospital, so he couldn't meet his daughter until she was two days old and we were sent home. Staff caring for me we're already in full PPE and exposed to my infection, so I don't entirely see why my partner needed to miss such a huge life moment, which in turn left me without a birth partner and in a deal more distress.'



Patient Choice

When questioned as to whether they felt they were involved in decisions about their care after the birth, 25% of respondents answered 'no' with a further 2% who didn't know or couldn't remember.



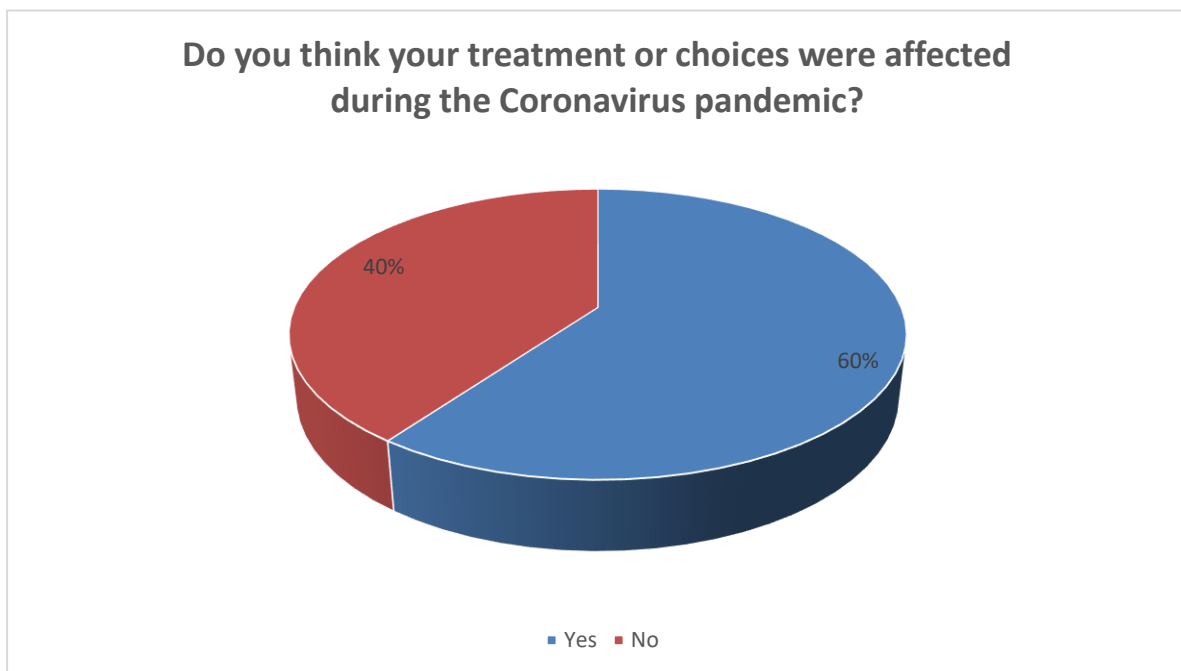
Additional comments left noted both positive and negative experiences.

'Fantastic support from the Nursing staff, Psychologist and Chaplin'

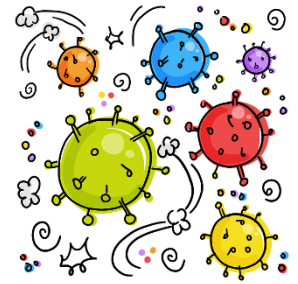
'I begged for hours for the needle in my wrist to be removed as I struggled to pick baby up...eventually it was...then someone came to do blood pressure and my blood shot out of my arm all over the baby. I was left to clean it.'

The CHC also asked respondents if they thought their treatment or choices were affected during the Covid-19 pandemic, and if so, to please share their experiences.

It was unsurprising to hear that 60% of survey respondents did believe their treatment or choices had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Patients reported a lack of care and support provided by healthcare professionals which was all the more important at a time when Covid-19 restrictions meant friends and family could not visit to offer the usual support' along with feeling rushed during appointments and a lack of follow-up on results.



"Massively. I barely saw any Health professional during pregnancy and the first year of having my child - much less than you normally would for your first child. And considering all antenatal classes were cancelled during covid it was so much more important to see Midwives to get help as we just had no clue about some things. We couldn't have people like family / friends come visit and help because of Covid. I feel like if I did see a Midwife / Doctor / Health Assistant it was all very rushed (except for in hospital when I actually had her) and they just wanted to get in and out and didn't check my welfare or answer my questions i was just told to look on NHS website which does not help not with your first! I feel very let down by Health Visitors mainly but also Midwives during pregnancy due to the lack of care and support and since having her my mental health has plummeted due to lack of support despite asking for it. I appreciate things had to be different because of Covid, but we needed more support from Midwives & Health Visitors because there was no support elsewhere. I cannot fault the hospital when I had her and cannot fault the willingness for Midwives / breast feeding experts to come to the house to help in that first week until I was confident in her latching"

'I felt I had a bit of a traumatic start to my birth and my baby was born with an unknown skin rash and infection which led to being put on an iv for a few days I believe it may have had something to do with my placenta which was sent off but I have heard nothing back , also nothing regarding rash for baby'

Patients also noted having no choice around where their antenatal appointments would take place, or where they could have their baby. Husbands could not attend appointments with their wives to offer support or visit them in hospital.

'Lack of choice of where to have baby. Lack of support from husband at appointments and during hospital stay after the birth. Lack of staff support during hospital stay after the birth. Phone appointments instead of in person.'

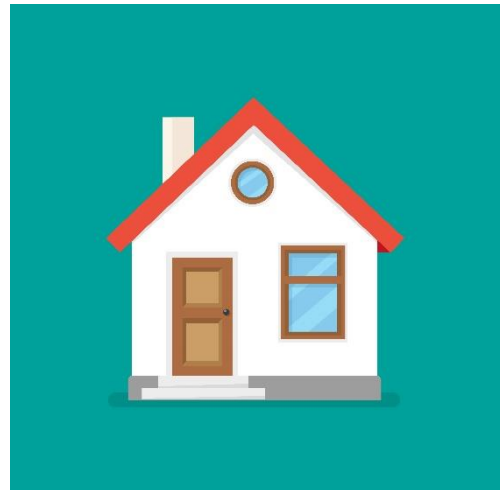
'No choice over where antenatal appointments took place. Husband could not join me at appointments despite this being his child too. Community Midwife reported that appointments were only supposed to be 15 minutes long as directed from seniors. This is in no way good enough to accurately assess and care for individuals.'

'Having to attend appointments alone, partner could only attend during active labour so had to go in for induction alone. Partner only allowed to stay for one hour after giving birth via c-section and not allowed to return. With hindsight I was not well enough to leave the hospital but did so 24 hours after giving birth as I was so alone and needed help with picking up my baby to feed and change them etc. ward was too busy for staff to help'

Patients informed us of instances where they were forced to receive distressing news alone, due to Covid-19 restrictions.

'Isolation of being told by a junior Doctor without my husband present that I was likely to lose the baby caused a huge issue with my emotional well-being the same as being told the risks of a condition I had on my own and then having to try and rely this information to loved ones on my own'

One patient informed the CHC that one of the reasons they opted for a home birth was as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions, despite also being concerned about the possibility of something going wrong with a home birth.



'One of the reasons I opted for a home birth was due to coronavirus. With my first child I had a difficult labour and after birth. I needed my partner there. The thought of him not being by my side made me feel very anxious. I like the idea of a home birth but was always worried something could happen. Due to Covid I decided the best place was at home.'

One respondent took the opportunity to share their frustrations with the lack of notice of Midwives attendance which would disrupt baby's sleeping patterns.

'It was also not helpful that when she was being weighed every two days, Midwives would call or show up at the house with little or no notice. It was very stressful and interrupted our early attempts at routine. Occasionally, we had just gotten her to sleep, and a Midwife would want us to wake her up to see her breastfeed. We were getting so little sleep that this was really not welcome - or especially helpful as she was finally full enough to go to sleep.'

Patient Care

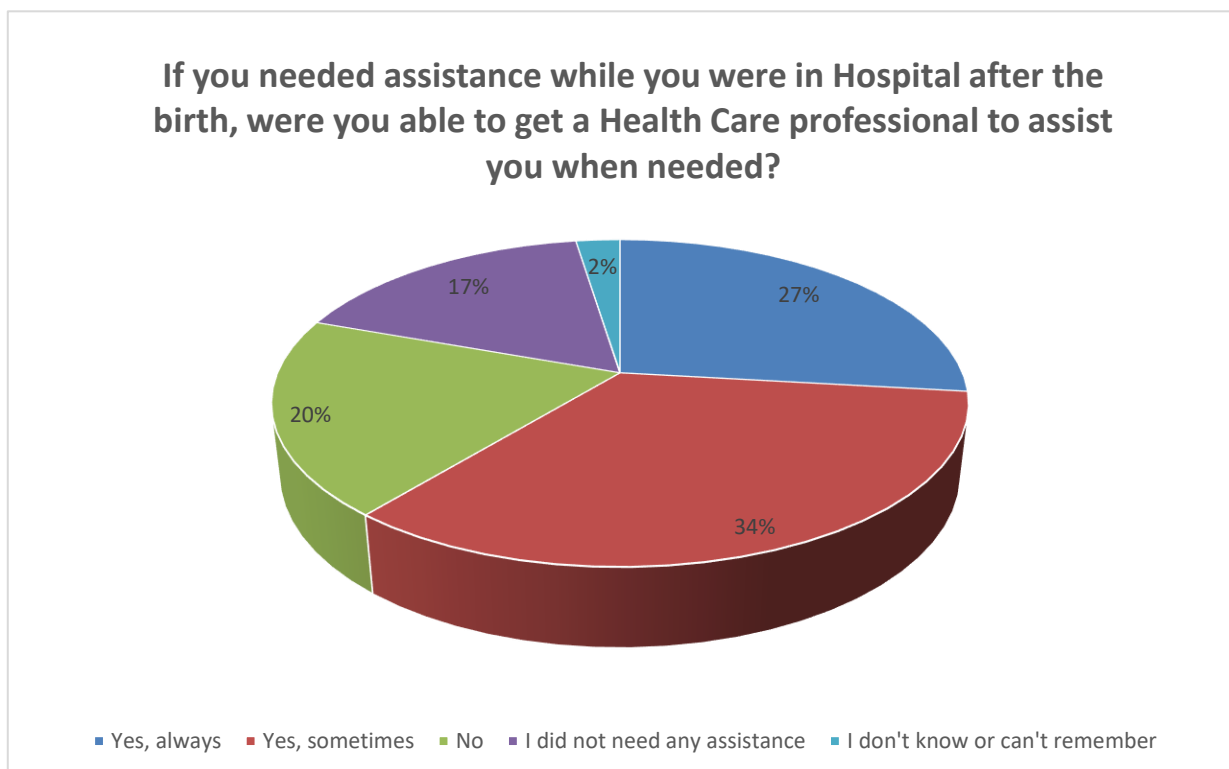
The CHC wanted to gather feedback from patients on the care they received from healthcare professionals following the birth of their baby.



We asked respondents to tell us if they were able to get a healthcare professional to assist them when needed while they were in Hospital following the birth.

Disappointingly only 27% of survey respondents answered 'yes, always' to this question.

17% respondents did not require any assistance and a further 2% didn't know or couldn't remember.



Patients reported staff not answering call bells, and a lack of support or attention afforded by staff.

One patient reported a worrying experience where they were incorrectly identified and almost given medication which would have had adverse side effects for this patient.

'awful care'

'Put in a room on my own. Not checked on regularly. Had to press the button for help with breastfeeding a lot but not given support needed.'

'I was discharged initially using someone else's notes as I was referred to as living somewhere else and nearly given medication that I cant take and that could have made me very unwell'

'My baby was struggling to latch and I was absolutely exhausted from 3 days of labour and now a newborn - I waited so long I ended up going out to find someone'

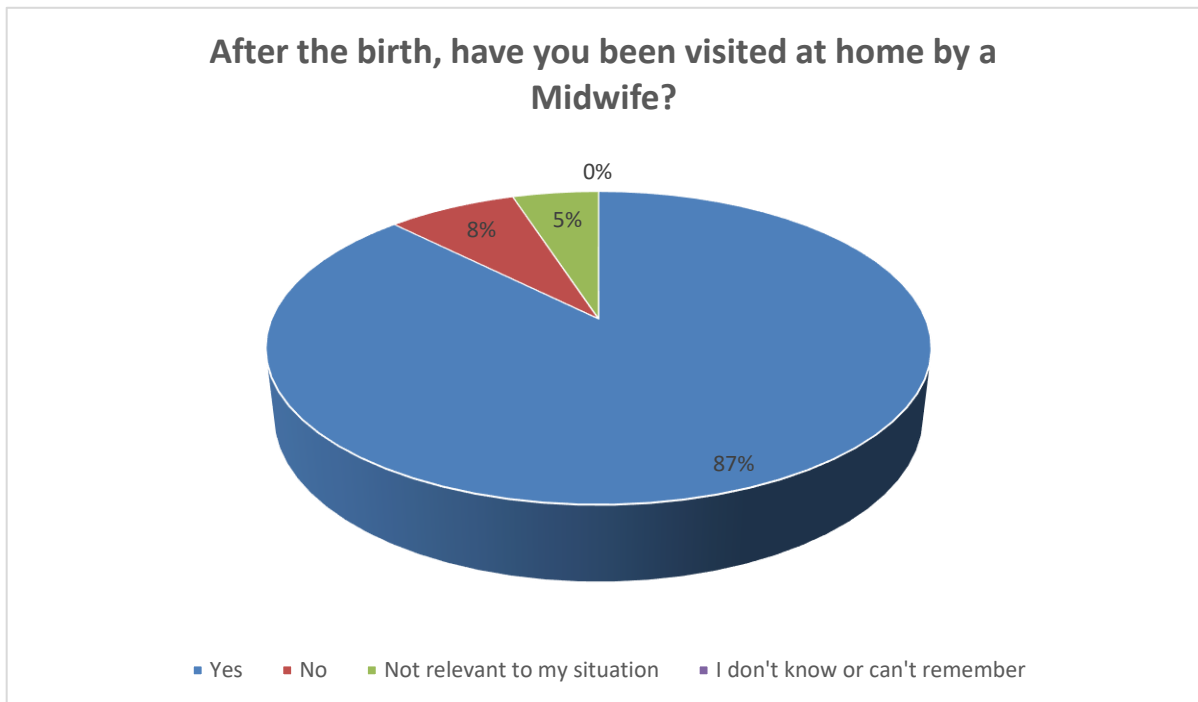
'After birth was the worst experience of it all. No staff answering the all bells. When took baby to Nurse station no staff there had to feed him as he was screaming. Was told off by them hours later as they hadn't done his BM but that is what I had been trying to find them for. Overnight closed curtains around bed whilst I put the light on to not wake other new mums who had been brought in overnight and Midwife without asking fully opened them exclaiming 'I don't have curtains closed on my ward''

Some patients reported very positive experiences.

'short stay on post-delivery was the best care received during entirety of pregnancy / childbirth'

'Staff on the ward were great (we stayed in for observation for 48 hours) but clearly quite stretched.'

87% survey respondents confirmed to the CHC that they were visited at home by a Midwife after the birth. A further 5% survey respondents reported that this was not relevant to their situation.



Despite the majority of respondents confirming they were visited at home by a Midwife following the birth of their baby, patients reported inadequate post-natal checks. Patients informed the CHC that the only checks carried out by the Midwife were on the baby.

Some were not offered a '6 weeks' check and had to request this after being advised by their Health Visitor to do so.

Patients reported missed their opportunity for a '6 weeks' check due to non-receipt of their invite letter.

Other patients report their appointment request being refused despite receiving a letter inviting them to book.

One patient described how her personal circumstances were not taken into account by healthcare professionals resulting in a complete lack of support for this first-time parent.

'I was never given a post-natal check they only checked the baby'

'Very inadequate post-natal check'

'I wasn't offered a 6 week check-up. I had to request this. advised by HV again'

'I received a letter inviting me for my 6 week check-up. When I phoned to make an appointment it was refused, I was told the Doctor wouldn't see me despite having a C-section. My scar seemed to be weeping so my Midwife came out to check on me at my insistence.'

'I'm on my own a lot due to my husband being in military and no family near. This wasn't taken into account and feel they just wanted out as quickly as possible so never really asked if I was coping okay. This was my first baby and I had no support and am still struggling from the complete lack of support after that first week'

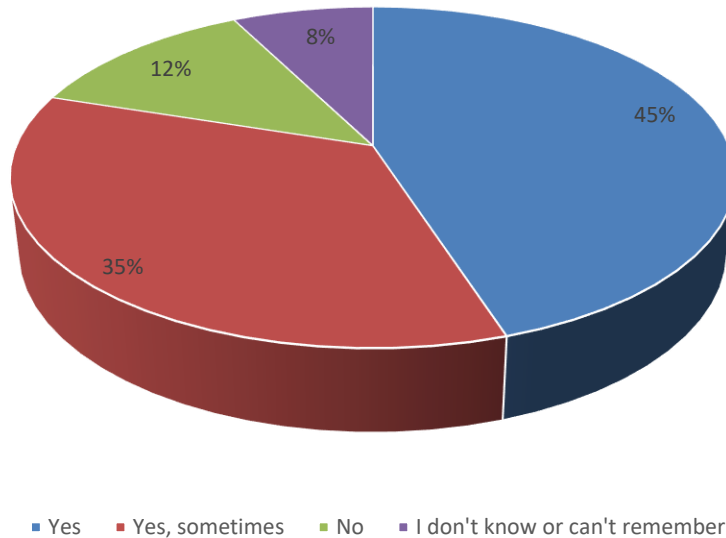
'I did not receive a letter to have a check-up and by the time I received information that I may need to book it myself, it was too late'

12% survey respondents informed the CHC that their personal circumstances were not taken into account by their Midwife when giving them advice.

35% survey respondents reported that their Midwife 'sometimes' took their personal circumstances into account when giving advice.

A further 8% didn't know or couldn't remember if their Midwife took their personal circumstances into account when giving them advice.

Did the Midwife take your personal circumstances into account when giving you advice?



Feedback provided by respondents on this matter record experiences where the Father was not included in discussions and a lack of support that was promised to patients.

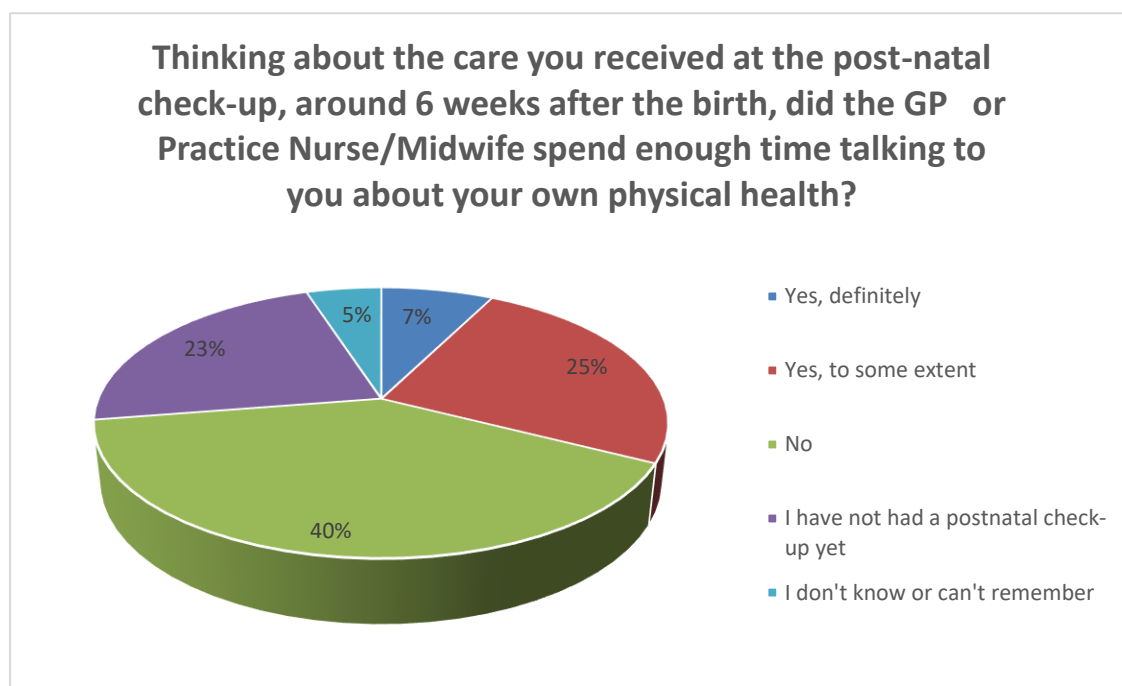
'Remember to speak to the father when talking to the mother. I don't recall a lot of what was said and also the father felt a bit of a "spare part" although we know it wasn't the intention.'

'Not enough support provided post birth. Was told I would get FaceTime calls in place of face to face but this did not happen with Midwives, Health Visitors or breastfeeding support.'

We questioned respondents on whether their healthcare professional spent enough time during their 6 week post-natal check-up discussing their physical health.

It was disappointing to hear that 40% of respondents answered 'no' to this question, with a further 25% answering 'yes, to some extent'.

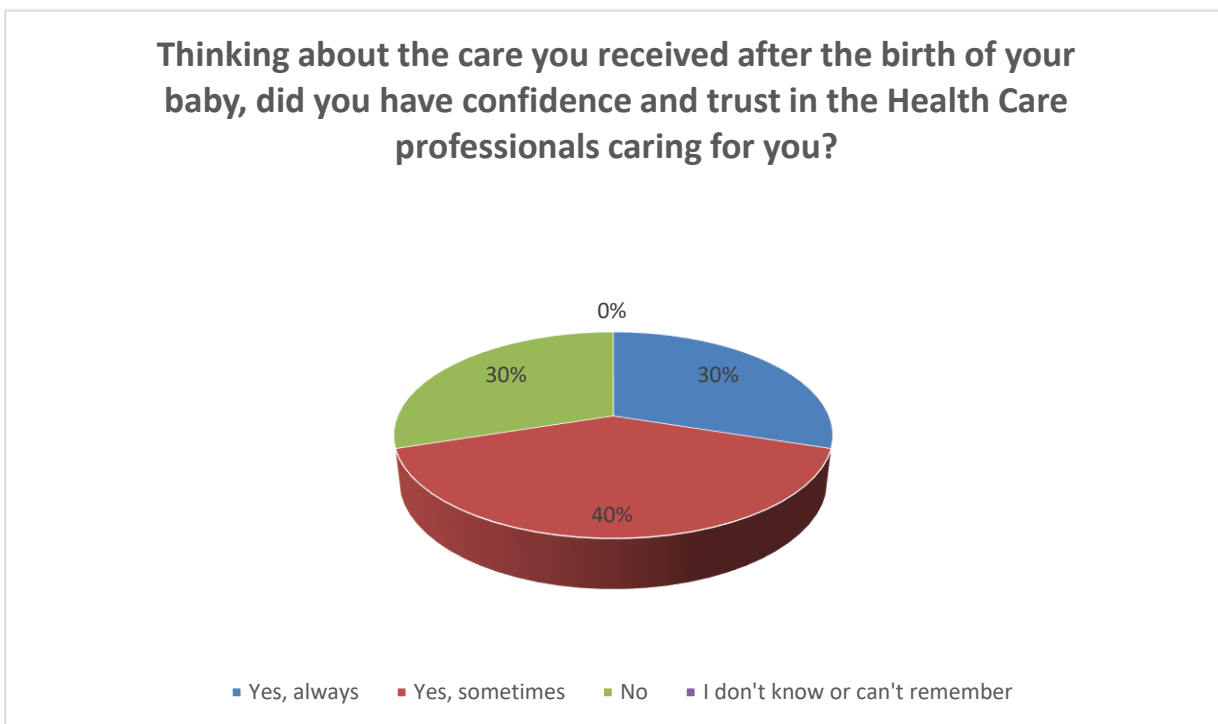
23% of respondents confirmed they had not received a post-natal check up at the time of completing the survey.



One patient stated:

'I felt that the feeding plan wasn't adequately explained to us at first.'

When questioned on whether they had confidence and trust in the healthcare professionals caring for them after the birth of their baby, 30% respondents answered 'no'. A further 30% of respondents answered 'yes, sometimes'.



When offered the opportunity to leave reasons for their answer, respondents told the CHC that they saw a different Midwife at each appointment which clearly didn't foster trust or confidence for our survey respondents.

***'Different
Midwife every
time.'***

***'Different
Midwife for
every
appointment'***

One patient did report a very positive experience with their Midwife.

***'Midwife was amazing throughout my
pregnancy and after the birth'***



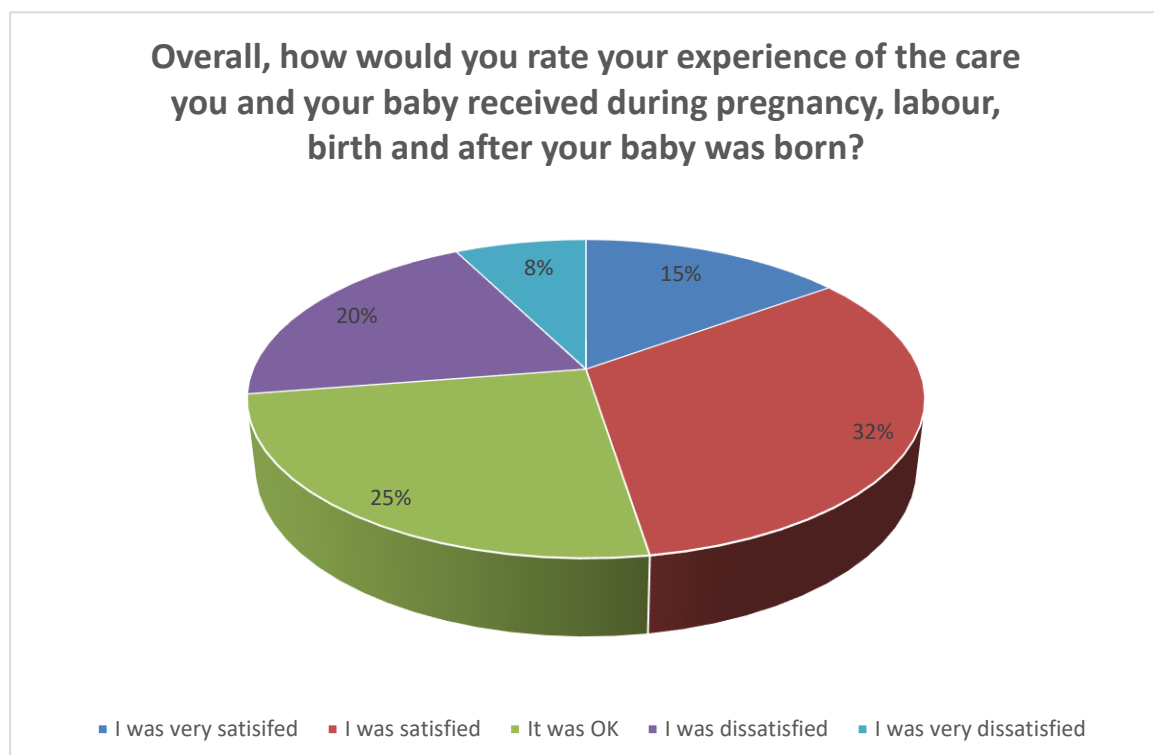
Our final survey question asked respondents to provide an overall rating of their experience of the care they and their baby received during pregnancy, labour, birth and after their baby was born.



We then gave them the opportunity to leave any other feedback they wished to share on Maternity Services in Cardiff & Vale.

It was very disappointing to hear that only 47% of respondents rated their overall experience as 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'.

25% simply rated their experience as 'Ok' with a further 35% rating their experience as being 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'.



It can be seen from the feedback provided around this question, that even patients who rated their experience as 'satisfied' had instances throughout their time with Maternity Services that could be improved upon.

'I found that being put in a room by myself after having just given birth was really difficult, especially as my partner had to leave due to the Covid restrictions. This was really upsetting'

'Not directly about the care but the ward I was on was the last ward for the food trolley. I was in hospital for 3 days following the birth and not once could I have a hot meal as they had run out and I had to have sandwiches. Not the best for a tired / run down new mum to keep up her strength'

'Staff did not introduce themselves in the Antenatal Assessment ward when admitted with problems. Induction ward Midwives were terrible. Very paternalistic approach to women.'

The same was true for those who rated their overall experience as 'ok'.

'I understand the stresses on the NHS but overall the system could do with updating from start to finish, however I don't believe that includes staff and everyone I dealt with was always kind and professional. The hospitals and chairs are uncomfortable for pregnant woman sitting waiting up to 6 hours sometimes with sciatica and 8 months pregnant I felt unwell every time I left an to appointment due to overall uncomfortableness. Also I never understood what any of the Consultants said to me even when asking for it to be explained better I was left more confused, I was also given bad news at each appointment and just sent out, I understand there was Covid restrictions but to not allow anyone in when bad news is given is not ideal. I also don't think the aftercare is great the Midwives want to discharge you as soon as possible I basically all but begged my Midwife to come out but there was 'never a need', my baby ended up in hospital.'

It was hard not having your partner there, especially at Midwife checks as they can take in and remember bits that you struggle to with pregnancy brain. I think we were all hugely let down during Covid. Even to the level that all my daughter's letters for her jabs were 2 months late. When I tried to register and book her first ever jabs it was impossible because my doctors hadn't been informed by the hospital of her birth or something so she was nearly late having them if I hadn't have remembered (which is hard when you've just had a baby).

'After birth care was appalling. Visited every day by a Healthcare professional who couldn't provide a time for the appointment, different advice given by each person, no consistent advice, made to feel my needs were no longer important, wasn't informed at any point I'd be visited by a Health visitor (my first child so not aware of these things) until I had a phone call appointment with her.'

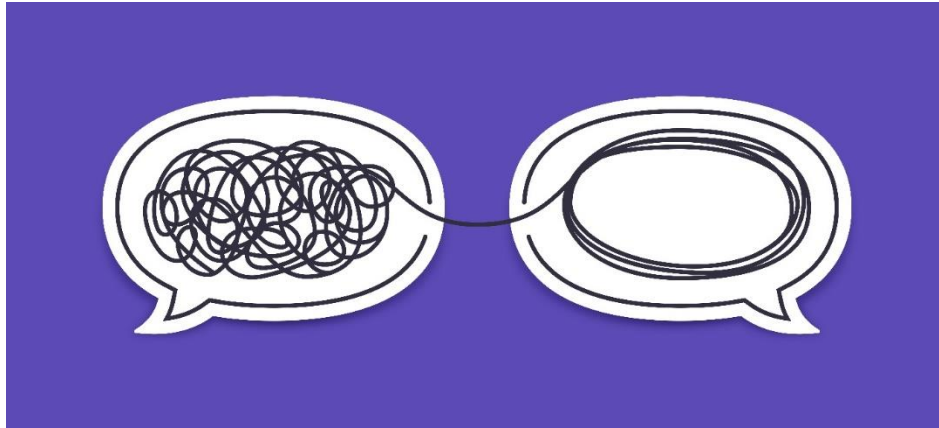
'Its a shame because my pregnancy care was good except for my husband not being present. My babies care on NICU was incredible but my post birth was awful and I felt like no-one understood'

For some who rated their experience as 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' the consequences of those negative experiences are still being felt today.

'Currently experiencing (still undiagnosed) PTSD as a result of this experience. I no longer wish to have further children for fear of my physical and mental health'

'Post-natal support needs to be improved so mothers don't feel like they've been abandoned.'

'NHS Midwife delivery failed us that day, and we have had to live with the consequences to this day.'



Learning from what we heard

With only 47% of survey respondents rating their overall experience of Maternity Services in Cardiff & Vale as 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied', it is clear respondents feel there is scope and need for improvement across all the themes discussed in our survey, patient choice, communication and information, and care.

PATIENT CHOICE

It was clear and not unexpected to learn from the results of our survey that patient choice was severely impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic. 80% of respondents reported no choice in where their antenatal appointments would take place, but at the same time reported the designated location to be mainly suitable for their needs. It should be noted however that this lack of choice resulted in additional travel costs for some patients, which is concerning as this could disproportionately affect those patients requiring to visit antenatal services more frequently than others, or those on a lower or fixed income.

Some patients commented that hospital chairs are uncomfortable for pregnant women with long waits experienced by some to be seen for their appointments.

Covid restrictions with regards to being accompanied during birth within hospital settings was noted by one patient as a reason they opted for a home birth, despite concerns around safety. We also heard from other patients who struggled to make informed decisions while in hospital alone during labour and birth due to being in pain or a distressing situation.

Despite 82% respondents reporting feeling involved in decisions about their antenatal care, others reported examples of their birth plans not being followed, decisions being made on their behalf during labour and being given medication they specifically did not want to receive.

It was not unsurprising to hear that 60% of survey respondents felt their choices were affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

Survey respondents told us how there was a lack of information provided during antenatal care, which was especially difficult for first-time parents. Although 87% of respondents confirmed they felt they had enough time to discuss matters with their Midwife, first-time parents again seemed to be disproportionately affected by the 10 min appointments given as they felt these were too short for them to discuss matters fully.

92% of respondents reported that they had contact details for their Midwife or Midwifery team but they also reported on the difficulties they had in making contact, with calls going unanswered, or responses to queries not supplied in a timely fashion. For those who did contact their Midwife, some patients informed the CHC that they felt rushed during this contact.

One respondent gave an example of being passed back and forth between her GP and Midwifery team when attempting to obtain treatment for a UTI while pregnant, which resulted in her being treated by the Out Of Hours service.

Although 92% respondents reported being spoken to by their Midwife in a way they could understand, patients also reported being confused by medical terms used by some Healthcare professionals during appointments.

One patient highlighted the failure of staff to introduce themselves whilst in the Antenatal Assessment ward.

Restrictions on the patients' ability to have someone accompany them to antenatal appointments was also a problem highlighted as it was reported by some as they struggled to retain information due to 'baby brain'. For others, they were forced to receive distressing news about their pregnancy alone, with no emotional support from partners at an extremely distressing time.

Also distressing was the need for some patients to provide medical history information with regards to previous miscarriages to each Health care professional they saw, as there was a lack of knowledge of the patients' previous medical history.

It was noted by some patients that birth plans were not respected. Others reported their birth plans being changed without their knowledge or any discussion, and the struggle that then ensued for those patients to contact the relevant Consultants to obtain an explanation for this.

It was extremely concerning to the CHC that 44% of respondents informed us that they did not feel the concern they raised during labour and the birth of their baby was taken seriously by Health care professionals. Patients informed us of instances where their concerns over their pregnancy or the progress of their labour were dismissed, only for their concerns to be proven valid and further medical intervention required, this resulted in one patient reporting they almost lost their baby and another suffered with an undiagnosed broken rib.

It was also stated by respondents that they felt staff were dismissive of their concerns following the birth of their baby. It was reported by one patient that they suffered injuries during labour that were not taken seriously until a Health Visitor stepped in to advocate on her behalf with other Health care professionals. Another reported their GP having to do the same and take over their antenatal care.

Patients also reported a lack of communication from staff with regards to their baby's progress while in specialised care, with one patient informing the CHC that their baby was returned to them with a tube in their nose and no explanation as to the reason provided.

It was disappointing to hear that 37% survey respondents felt they did not have a Health care professional to talk to about any worries or concerns following the birth of their baby. This lack of support came for some at a time when Covid-19 restrictions meant that they were unable to receive help and support from friends and family as they would normally have been able to do under normal circumstances.

For those in postnatal care, they reported a lack of information around their own physical recovery, with the vast majority of information provided being on the subject of breastfeeding.

Patients also reported that the postnatal information given to them was non-specific to their baby, and therefore not always useful or applicable. Patients also reported being given conflicting information from each Health care professional they saw during their postnatal care.

Another issue raised by some respondents was the lack of appointment times provided for postnatal visits by Health care professionals. This was said to be unhelpful whilst trying to establish a routine for a new-born baby.

It was also disappointing to hear that 63% of survey respondents received no information on how to leave feedback or make a complaint with regards to their experiences within Maternity Services in Cardiff & Vale.

PATIENT CARE

Survey respondents informed the CHC that only 42% saw the same Midwife at each of their appointments. It was noted by some that they saw a different Midwife at each of their appointments and never saw the same staff member twice. This lack of continuity of staff appears to be a contributing factor to the lack of trust and confidence that some patients had in Health care professionals responsible for their care as they were unable to build any kind of relationship with their Health care professional that would foster this trust and confidence.

It was disappointing to hear from some respondents that they encountered 'rude staff', particularly so for one respondent who was at the time, attempting to book an appointment for reduced movement at UHW.

Other respondents noted that staff in hospital during their labour and birth appeared very busy and 'stressed out' with other commenting that they were made to feel like a nuisance who was bothering them. Patients noted that staff were not answering call bells, one patient was not in a position to be able to reach the call bell and had to call out for staff to assist them. Other reported being left alone for long periods of time, without family and partners able to be present some found this very distressing.

Patients reported long waits for pain relief despite multiple requests and highlighted a lack of emotional support provided for those whilst in Specialised Care. 40% survey respondents rated their experience of Specialised care negatively.

Most concerning are the patients who reported feeling unsafe and uncared for, using words such as '*traumatic*' to describe their experience. The consequences for some patients were severe. Patients reported suffering from PTSD as a result of their pregnancy and labour, others no longer wish to have any further children after the experience they suffered.

Other respondents were highly complimentary of all the staff that they had seen throughout their pregnancy and the care that they received during pregnancy, labour and postnatal care. One patient reported that she birthed alone at home due to the Midwifery team being so busy but when they attended following the birth she described them as extremely supportive and 'amazing'.

During postnatal care, we heard that patients felt there was no emotional support provided. Staff were again said to be dismissive of concerns held by patients with regards to Breastfeeding. It was also said that during postnatal care checks with regards to the mother were poor, with the focus of the appointments being on the new-born. This resulted in some respondents being made to feel that their needs were no longer important, with 40% respondents confirming that their physical health was not discussed at all during their post-natal appointments.

It was disappointing to hear that a number of respondents were not offered a '6 weeks' check. With others reporting difficulties in booking an appointment even when invited to. Some face to face appointments were due to be replaced with scheduled 'Facetime' calls as a result of the pandemic, but for some these calls were never received despite being promised.

It is clear that a number of the issues highlighted by respondents throughout this survey such as lack of patient choice, are as a direct result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Issues raised around patient care, communication, staff attitude and

behaviour, and the dismissing of patient concerns cannot be attributed to the pandemic and should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Pregnancy, birth and caring for a new baby can be a very difficult, frightening and stressful time for many people. Maternity services should be ensuring patients feel supported, safe and cared for during this time and working to ensure they are not causing, contributing to or exacerbating negative experiences for patients.

Thanks

We thank everyone who took the time to share their views and experiences with us about their health and care services and to share their ideas.

We hope the feedback people have taken time to share influences healthcare services to recognise and value what they do well – and take action where they need to as quickly as they can to make things better.

Feedback

We'd love to hear what you think about this publication, and any suggestions about how we could have improved it, so we can use this to make our future work better.

This report is available in Welsh and English.



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If you write to us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to your correspondence.

We welcome telephone calls in Welsh.

South Glamorgan Community Health Council