

What did parents and carers think of maternity services in Norfolk and Waveney in 2018?



Summary

In 2016 NHS England published 'Better Births: Improving outcomes of maternity services in England'. The report set out NHS England's vision for the planning, design and safe delivery of maternity services; how women, babies and families will be able to get the type of care they want; and how staff will be supported to deliver such care.

Local maternity services across Norfolk and Waveney are now taking action to implement the recommendations of NHS England's 'Better Births' report. To help with this at the start of the process we've asked parents and carers what they think of local maternity services. This will help us to understand if there are any particular local issues that need to be considered when making changes to services.

Here is a summary of what parents and carers told us about local maternity services:

- Overall, mothers and partners were positive about their experience of having a baby in Norfolk and Waveney and the care they received throughout their pregnancy, during labour and after giving birth.
- Many mothers and partners praised the midwives and other health professionals that looked after them for being caring, kind and passionate about doing their job well, particularly those that work at the hospitals and helped to deliver their babies.
- Mothers and partners told us that when they built-up a relationship with a midwife it helped them to feel more comfortable, less worried about things and more trusting of the professional caring for them.
- Mothers and partners who saw quite a lot of different midwives didn't like having to repeat their medical history. For quite a lot of people they saw this as a waste of time, frustrating or "a pain".
- For some people though, such as parents and carers with mental health conditions, it is really difficult having to tell their story to lots of midwives. And at the same time, it is particularly important that each midwife that cares for them truly understands their situation.

- Some parents and carers said that they don't think that having one midwife providing all their care, is particularly practical or realistic. The majority of the parents and carers said that their preference is to either be cared for by a small team of midwives throughout pregnancy, during birth and after birth, or to have one midwife care for them before and after birth.
- The mothers and partners who felt involved in making decisions about their care and felt that their birth plan was followed where possible were more positive about their experience than those who didn't feel listened to or who felt left out of the decision making process.
- Some mothers and partners said that they were left feeling unsupported and confused after receiving conflicting or inadequate advice and guidance, particularly around breast feeding.
- A few mothers who were having their second or third child said that they felt they did not receive enough support and that it was assumed they would be ok because they had already had a child.

You Said - We Have, We Will

Work is already underway in many of the areas raised in this report. Here is what we have done or will be doing as a result of what you have told us.

You said: Midwives were kind, caring, compassionate and did their job well, particularly those in Hospitals and delivering babies

We did: Fed this back to Midwives and we will share this report with our Universities to ensure future Midwives continue to understand the importance of supporting women and their partners to have good experience.

You said: Building a relationship with the Midwife was important, and that you didn't like to repeat your story to lots of different Midwives, particularly women with complex medical and social needs

We did: In spring 2019 we will be starting 'pilot' teams of Midwives who will have a caseload of women they care for throughout pregnancy, delivery and postnatally

You said: Some mums said that they didn't think it was realistic to be cared for by the same Midwife throughout their maternity journey. Around 12% said they would be happy to be cared for by different Midwives throughout their maternity journey, 31% wanted to be cared for by the same midwife before and after birth,

34% liked the idea of a small team of Midwives caring for them throughout, 19% wanted a dedicated midwife throughout, 2% didn't know.

We did: We have spoken to staff about working patterns and how we might incorporate aspects of continuity into the various Midwifery Teams. We are planning some pilot models to be launched in the spring to test how these different approaches could work in practise. We will continue to work with our Maternity Voices Partnerships (MVPs) to develop these new models. The most important aspect of our pilots will be collecting feedback from the women who are involved in these. We will be asking for their feedback on how these are working every 6 weeks. Feedback from women will provide us with insights as to how to develop these models.

You said: Feeling involved in making decisions made the maternity experience more positive

We will: We are designing a fully personalised shared care plan that includes planning around birth options and labour. Women will be able to record their thoughts and wishes and use this at the next Midwife appointment to discuss choices and their decisions. We are highlighting shared decision making into our existing training modules.

You said: You felt unsupported and confused after getting conflicting or inadequate advice - particularly around breastfeeding.

We did: We have trained all our Midwives and Midwife Support Workers to UNICEF Baby Friendly standard. This will help to ensure advice is current and evidence based. We had a discussion at the JPUH Whose Shoes event and it emerged that Midwives will often suggest different approaches or techniques depending on their own professional experience and the differing needs of different women. We will provide links to a variety of evidence based resources on the planned patient portal so that women and partners can familiarise themselves with these techniques during the pregnancy.

You said: Women having their second or third child did not receive enough support

We will: We are reviewing our current birth preparation classes, and also designing personalised plans of care for each woman that can be completed by women, partners, Midwives and Doctors. This will help facilitate a better understanding of every woman's needs. Women and professionals will share information and plans of care.

You said: Of those that had written a Birth Plan 18.5% said their Birth plan was followed, 52% said their Birth Plan had to be adapted but was followed as closely as it could be with safety in mind for both mother and baby.

We will: Birth plans will eventually be a major component of the new patient portal – an online information resource for women accessed through a login - and will allow both women, their partners and professionals to add to it

throughout pregnancy up until 36 weeks. At this point the plan is set but can be amended if there are changes to the plan. We are working with colleagues across Norfolk and Waveney to ensure the same plan is used for all women regardless of which of our 3 hospitals they have their baby.

You said: Some women felt their mental health needs were not properly considered when in labour and giving birth.

We will: All Midwives will receive specific Mental Health Training from our Mental Health Midwife Champions. We are working on a standard plan of care with our specialist Midwives and doctors to use across the whole maternity journey and have set up a task group across Norfolk & Waveney to ensure provision is equitable and care pathways are further developed.

You said: You were concerned about staffing levels

We did: We have commissioned an independent review of staffing levels which will help us monitor and ensure the correct levels of staff are available at all times. We also discussed this at the Whose Shoes event held at the James Paget Hospital (JPH)

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Methodology – how we carried out this research

Local health services and Healthwatch Norfolk have worked together to find out what parents and carers think of maternity services in Norfolk and Waveney.

To get people's views we:

- Produced an online survey which any parent or carer from Norfolk and Waveney could complete
- Carried out face-to-face interviews with parents and carers at baby and toddler groups across Norfolk
- Examined the feedback that Healthwatch Norfolk had received about maternity services via its website.

Our survey for parents and carers was launched on 14 March 2018 and closed on 29 April 2018. It was promoted via social media and in local newsletters by a range of partner organisations, including the acute hospitals, the maternity voice partnerships, the five local clinical commissioning groups, local councils, Healthwatch Norfolk and Healthwatch Suffolk.

Healthwatch Norfolk received 166 reviews about maternity services between during 2018. The reviews relate to children's centres, hospital services and community services (community midwives and health visitors). The majority of these reviews came from interviews that Healthwatch Norfolk carried out with parents and carers when they visited local baby and toddler groups across Norfolk, with some being made by people who left feedback on the Healthwatch Norfolk website.

Other research into local maternity services

This report sets out the findings from our survey and the work that Healthwatch Norfolk has done. Two other pieces of research have been carried out into what parents and carers think of local maternity services, which also provide useful insights:

- In 2015 Healthwatch Norfolk published 'Maternity Services in Norfolk: A snapshot of user experience Oct 2014 – April 2015. This report was produced in partnership with MAP (Mancroft Advice Project) and includes information about the experience of young parents. The report can be read here:

<https://www.healthwatchnorfolk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/15-07-Maternity-Services-in-Norfolk.pdf>

- In 2016 Healthwatch Suffolk published ‘Supporting Mum – A report of patient experience of the maternity pathway in Suffolk.’ This report includes information about parents and carers who live in Waveney and use the maternity services at the James Paget University Hospital. The report can be read here: <https://www.healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Maternity-Report-Suffolkwide-Final-LQ.pdf>

Survey results

266 mothers responded to our survey. Here is a summary of what mother’s told us about their experience of giving birth in Norfolk and Waveney:

Care during pregnancy

We asked: ‘What was the care like that you received prior to giving birth to your last baby?’ Here is a summary of what people told us and some quotes from respondents:

The skills, attitude and experience of midwives and other healthcare professionals

Many of the mothers who completed our survey were very positive about the staff who had cared for them. They described midwives, as well as other health professionals who cared for them throughout their pregnancy, as being caring, kind and passionate about doing their job well.

77 of the responses to our survey made positive comments like these about staff:

- “Fantastic. Very well cared for, listened to and encouraged throughout the entire process. No judgement, just kindness.”
- “Excellent very attentive.”

Feeling listened to

Some mothers told us that they felt listened to and that they had had their 'voice heard', which made them feel positive about the care they received. Being involved in the decision making regarding the care of their child and themselves contributed to them feeling they had received a good service.

- "Absolutely brilliant. Calm, knowledgeable team who took into account my thoughts and feelings and made decisions with me not for me."
- "I received great care, I felt listened to and given options and guided to make the best decisions throughout my pregnancy."
- "Fantastic staff listened and were very caring."

In contrast, a small number of mothers responding to our survey who didn't feel that their voice was heard were more negative about the care they received during their pregnancy. One of the major reasons that they thought their care was poor was because they felt the problems they experienced could have been avoided if they had been more involved in decision-making about their care.

- "No one listened to my concerns that my baby will be a big one... Any concerns were brushed under the carpet and not listened to. I wished someone listened - my boy was 14 days late and really big (4.7kg) I had to be induced, which didn't really work and it all ended in an emergency C-section, lost lots of blood and it was all traumatic. I wished someone took my concerns seriously and referred me for size scan, I could have C-section as an elective option and be out of hospital after a day or two, not spend a week there."
- "Poor. 5 different midwives, one of whom did not listen to my concerns about mode of delivery (given the 3rd degree tear I suffered with my first child) and dismissed them with a flippant 'it won't happen again' comment. I met with two separate consultants before 36 weeks, neither of whom discussed any delivery options with me. Following scans at 37 and 39 weeks I was booked to be induced but still no delivery options discussed."

Continuity of care throughout pregnancy

In the Royal College of Midwives' 'Continuity of carer delivers better maternity care' document (2017, p17), continuity of care is described as building better relationships between a women and their midwives, with every women having the right to a named midwife who is responsible for ensuring personalised and one-to-one care throughout pregnancy.

In response to this question, 11 mothers said that the care they received was good because, or at least in part because, of having received continuity of care. At the same time, 36 mothers mentioned the lack of continuity of care as a reason they felt the ante-natal care they received was poor.

- “My Midwife took time to get to know me and my family, my history and gave me every second she could when I needed it. What an absolute diamond.”
- “I saw a lot of different midwives and with a heart complaint it felt I was explaining the same situation a lot as they hadn't met me before, continuity with my midwife would have been beneficial.”
- “Different midwives at every interaction, communication greatly lacking between midwives/consultant team so mixed messages... Did not pick up on major anxieties that could have led to a repeat of PND suffered after second child.”

Continuity of care and the ability to form a strong relationship and trust with a midwife or midwives was particularly important to people who mentioned having a history of mental illness. These mothers said their care would have been improved if they hadn't had to repeat their circumstances, staff understood their behaviour, and there was better support regarding anxiety and traumatic events.

- “Did not pick up on major anxieties that could have led to a repeat of PND suffered after second child.”
- “My midwife was very good. I saw her at Crestview. She helped relieve my anxieties and introduced me to hypnobirthing.”

Care when giving birth

We asked: 'What was the care like that you received when you gave birth?' Here is a summary of what people told us and some quotes from respondents:

The skills, attitude and experience of midwives and other healthcare professionals

The vast majority of mothers and partners told us the care they received when giving birth was good or excellent. Many mothers praised the midwives and other professionals for being caring, attentive and reassuring when giving birth. We received 64 comments like these from mothers and partners responding to our survey.

- “The care I received from James Paget was outstanding. I honestly couldn't fault it what so ever. All the midwives were lovely and so caring; they really went with the flow of my birth and with their help I managed to stop myself having gas and air until I was 6/7cm dilated as I was so calm!”
- “It was brilliant, I never thought I'd be laughing through what was a very tough time for me yet I was thanks to the amazing staff making me feel so relaxed.”
- “Excellent!! I could not fault my midwife. She was very funny and kind and really did her utmost to help relax me and keep me calm as I was very anxious and nervous. Her name was Fiona and she really is a credit to Queen Elizabeth midwifery team.”
- “Fantastic, exemplary and above all caring at a difficult and sometimes frightening time.”
- “Again amazing, had a c section and it was very organised and calm. I was checked constantly and felt well cared for.”
- “My delivery suite midwives were absolutely amazing. I could not recommend them enough! My labour went over four shifts and each time I would be praying the next midwife would be as lovely as the last and they always were!! They were always attentive, I rarely had to ask for anything.”

Communications with and between health professionals

Mothers told us that good communication with midwives and the other professionals caring for them was really important, in particular having 'each step explained' so that they knew what was happening now and what was likely to happen next. Some mothers explained that due to the complexity of giving birth, having a professional clarify each stage what was happening helped to reduce their anxiety and the stress surrounding their birth.

- "Due to having gestational diabetes & a VBAC I was monitored closely. I was induced & had each step explained. I ended up having an emergency c sec but they reassured & helped through each part."
- "Very calm and relaxed in the delivery suite. Midwife kept me informed and were helpful if I had questions or needed reassurance. Emergency button had to be pulled but I was informed throughout."

In direct contrast, 12 mothers who responded to our survey felt that the communication between themselves and those caring for them was poor. Some mothers also said that poor communication between different professionals such as doctors, midwives and support workers resulted in them receiving confusing or contradictory advice and information.

- "My baby was rushed to NICU following birth. Once I was cleaned up, I was left alone in the room, not knowing if my baby was ok. It was very traumatic and has played a huge part in me suffering from PND."
- "The care was good although they were short staffed that night and following the birth we were left on our own for a long time wondering what was happening as one staff member had to go home following my delivery due to illness."
- "Better than the earlier care. Still a bit inconsistent between nurses, DRs and support workers."
- "Very very disappointing. I was induced on Cley ward, Midwives overstretched and lacking in empathy. Nor real care or support/ advice- left to get on with it. Blakeney ward was atrocious. I was rushed there straight out of emergency

surgery and had no special care, no additional pain relief unless I cried my eyes out for it. Terrible breastfeeding advice. My baby was on NICU and Blakeney staff wouldn't move me so I could have some privacy. All in all it was a terrible experience and I dread returning when I have my second child."

Personalised care and feeling listened to

Some mothers praised how personalised the care was that they received:

- "Excellent. It was perfect and I was so happy with all the care we received. My midwife was fantastic, Vicky Hasting, calm, caring and straight, was positive and listened to my concerns and gave me options with no pressure and made me feel in total control."
- "Wonderful. Lovely midwife, as soon as she discovered we had done hypnobirthing she started using those techniques with us and gave very personalised care."
- "The midwives were professional but friendly and made my husband and I feel at ease and listened to and respected, they gave appropriate guidance and suggestions throughout my labour but allowed me to take the lead. When needed, they pushed me to ensure the safe delivery of my son."

Some mothers did not feel like they were listened to though, with some saying that they felt frustrated because they felt they knew what their bodies wanted to do, but that their thoughts and feelings were ignored:

- "Awful for second baby, older midwife refused to believe me when I told her the baby was coming (despite not examining me throughout the labour process). It got so bad I shouted at her and she finally agreed to look & surprise surprise baby was on the way!"
- "Was poor the midwife didn't listen to me when I said I needed to push."
- "I have very mixed feelings about the care I received during my labour as I was taken in for an induction and the care I received during the day was good the midwife listened to me and questioned the size of the baby and asked how I felt however I am very upset and annoyed about the care I received after that midwife left her shift as I wasn't listened to and even told that I was

making the pain up as the pain wasn't "Normal" labour pains and I was refused a C-section which I believe I should have had due to the baby being 10lb6oz at birth via forceps delivery."

- "Agency midwife left me with 4L in my bladder after an epidural didn't bother to do anything when I told her I hadn't passed urine, also she made a comment when I first came in that the contractions were actually close together like I'd been making it up."

Birth plans

We asked the people completing our survey whether had written a birth plan, and if they had, whether their birth plan was followed. 135 mothers who completed our survey told us that they had written a birth plan, with 121 saying that they did not write one. Three mothers said they were not sure if they had written a birth plan.

25 of the mothers told us that their birth plan was followed. This resulted in a positive birthing experience as their preferences were met.

- "All midwives went above and beyond to ensure that my birth went exactly how I wanted it to. Aside from a small blip at the end of labour (having to get out of the birthing pool due to baby being stuck) my birth went exactly how I wanted it to and I have the midwives to thank for that."
- "No vaginal examinations (VEs) was respected which was great."

Many of the mothers (71) who said that they had a birth plan, went on to say that their birth plan had to be adapted but was followed as closely as the medical staff could without endangering the mother or child.

- "My birth plan was only partially followed due to my long labour however myself and partner we're consulted on all aspects of labour and delivery. I have absolutely no concerns that I or my daughter did not receive the best care and treatment."
- "The only reason my birth plan was not followed was regarding the afterbirth. The midwives were willing to follow my plan for physiological third stage

however there was concerns over bleeding. They discussed their concerns and the options with me and I followed their recommendations.”

- “My birth plan was almost followed but I needed it to change in the end as I was in too much pain.”

A few people said that they felt their midwife and other health professionals completely ignored or failed to ask about their birthing plan. The six women who experienced this felt disappointed:

- “I don't think my birth plan was even read.”
- “My birth plan didn't even make it out the folder, no one took notice and said due to induction it couldn't be followed. Extremely disappointed.”

Mental health and wellbeing

Some mothers said they felt their mental health needs were not properly considered when giving birth. Mental health was mentioned by 12 mothers who said that they received poor care during labour. They said that their mental health condition was ignored and / or they felt unsupported. Many of these mothers went on to say that if they had received continuity of care, then their mental health condition would have been noticed and supported. In addition, they said that continuity of care provides a chance to build a trusting relationship with health professionals, which encourages people experiencing mental ill health to talk about how they are feeling and to ask for support.

- “Unfortunately my baby was in respiratory distress on delivery, and I was still unconscious. I was sent straight back to the postnatal ward once I'd recovered from the anaesthetic. I didn't get to see my baby until the following morning. I was on that ward with every other mother with their babies for three days. Whilst mine was in NICU. The second morning I asked a midwife to ring over to see how he was. She came back to tell me he had been intubated, and then left me all alone sobbing. I had to wait for my husband to arrive to wheel me over to him, as I still was too poorly to go over by myself. I am now

receiving counselling as I've been diagnosed with PTSD, depression and anxiety.”

- My baby was rushed to NICU following birth. Once I was cleaned up, I was left alone in the room, not knowing if my baby was ok. It was very traumatic and has played a huge part in me suffering from PND. Other than this the care we received in our week stay was excellent.”
- “The midwives with me at the beginning tried to get me an experienced midwife to take over on the next shift but I got a newly qualified young girl. She handled the birth well but things were missed in the aftercare and I needed a lot more emotional support having had a stillbirth previously. The doctor doing her rounds brought in a group of people doing a handover around my bed while I was in labour which made me feel very uncomfortable and vulnerable. She hadn't bothered to read my notes properly and made assumptions about the reason I had been induced, which were wrong, and didn't seem to be aware of the real reason I was there early which was extreme anxiety having had my stillbirth at full term. This was not considered by the medical team at all.”

Care for mothers and partners who've had a miscarriage

We received two responses from mothers who'd had a miscarriage:

- “I had a missed miscarriage and was disgusted to be left in a room on Cley ward (to wait for a consultant), which was being used as a store room. This meant that while we waited and tried to come to terms with the news we had been given, staff were constantly coming in and out to get supplies for other patients, some of whom were in labour! Even when the consultant was talking us through our options we were interrupted.”
- “I had a miscarriage last year and used the EPAU. The staff in there were empathetic and highly professional. It was an extremely difficult situation. I do however find the EPAU being so closely situated to the normal maternity scan unit unnerving. After being told my baby had died the thought of having to walk out of the doors into a place that was full of pregnant women one of

the cruellest situation to be put in with no other escape Route...

I believe the position of that department should be moved and made to offer a woman a safe exiting not to be confronted by everything they may have just been told they have lost. That is my only criticism of the services at Norwich hospital.”

Staffing levels

Some mothers said that they felt the poor care they had received was the result of their not being enough staff and that midwives didn't have enough time to provide good care. We received 22 responses to our survey like these:

- “I was brought in for induction at 9am and didn't get moved to delivery suite for the induction until 12.25am the following morning due to issues with beds and the process wasn't started until 4.30am due to staffing issues by which time having been up well over 24hrs it was an exhausting process to then be induced to give birth!!”
- “The ward beforehand was understaffed and had very little information about what was going on but the staff did try their best.”
- “The staff were very busy constantly.”

Care after giving birth

We asked: ‘What was the care like that you received after you had given birth?’

The skills, attitude and experience of midwives and other healthcare professionals

About a quarter of mothers who responded to our survey said that the midwife or midwives who cared for them after giving birth were excellent. Many mothers said that they felt anxious and quite emotional after giving birth, and that having a kind and caring professional support them helped to reduce their anxiety levels.

- “Very good all the midwives and healthcare professionals were all very friendly and caring.”

- “My baby had to go to special baby unit and it was horrible not being with him. They were fantastic and very supportive. They helped me breastfeed and made me feel welcome no matter what time it was.”

At the same time, about a quarter of mothers who responded to our survey said that they felt the midwives and other professionals were not supportive once they'd given birth, saying staff were rude or that they felt ignored.

- “Awful, so upsetting! I really try not to think about it, I don't understand how it can go so downhill being barked at by midwives who are uncaring. Awful!”
- “Once I went to the postnatal ward I don't think my care was very high standard at all. I had to ring the bell to get my catheter emptied. I developed a pressure sore but had apparently been checked regularly to make sure my skin was intact. I do not remember anyone turning me. I was given two doses of heparin post section accidentally as I had one on the deliver suite and then one when I arrived on Blakeney.”
- “Most the maternity assessment centre (MAC) quite rude only 1 would listen when I said little boy not latching on after 24 hours and listened to my concern that he was hungry.”

Quality of the information and advice given to mothers and their partners

Many mothers who completed our survey told us that they felt they had been given good information after they'd given birth and that they'd had everything explained to them well. Knowing what was happening with their health and the health of their baby, helped to reduce anxiety, particular for first time mums who accounted for 130 of the mothers who responded to this question.

- “Excellent care in hospital- especially after being in theatre, having a blood transfusion and an unexpectedly small baby. Good breastfeeding support too!”
- “It was excellent the doctors, nurses and midwives were very good at explaining everything and the care my new-born and myself received was great.”

- “I had support for breastfeeding in recovery and the team on the ward were helpful and reassuring. Felt like I could ask them questions and ask for help as needed after c section.”

Poor information was mentioned by 38 mothers who completed our survey. Mothers told us they felt that conflicting information and/or a lack of information left them feeling incompetent or not able to properly care their child, particularly the information about breastfeeding and being discharged from hospital.

- “Poor communication between the transfers to Blakeney meant I was scared, confused and upset overnight and my partner was distressed as I was given conflicting advice.”
- “On the day, I was discharged after 6 hours although I was heavily drowsy on pethidine, could hardly stand up, and had only fed my baby once with considerable help. This resulted in my baby being admitted as an emergency less than 24 hrs due to hypoglycaemia from failure to feed.”
- “There was a lot of mixed information given about feeding etc. Only to be told by the community midwife something completely the opposite the day after release. Very confusing for a first time mum already struggling with a baby who won’t feed.”
- “I also think they are too pushy about breastfeeding.”
- “I had one horrible one who shamed me about breastfeeding, which was unnecessary.”
- “My baby was taken to NICU, I felt I was not given a proper explanation as to why she was taken from me soon after birth. In the space of a week in hospital I had been moved 7 times to different rooms and beds on the wards. My baby was not successful at breastfeeding yet I was forced to try every 3 hours despite it distressing her and me, she was then identified as being tongue tied which was restricting her feeding. I chose to bottle feed her expressed milk and was told this was the wrong decision by a doctor and the nurse on the ward from NICU. It took another nurse the next day to tell me what I was doing was okay and to apologise for the way I was treated by the doctor. I felt I had very little support after giving birth.”

- “Awful. I stayed in for 5 nights post birth, I had contradictory advice from midwives despite and MCAs in relation to feeding and my discharge. My baby was fed formula by an MCA and a student midwife, without my consent whilst I was off the ward having a procedure, the rationale I was told was in case his blood sugar is low - but they wouldn't test it in case it is low as then they would have to follow a protocol. Utterly horrendous as I wanted my baby to be breast fed exclusively.”

A few returning mothers said they felt that they received less support and information because they were second time mothers. They felt that health professionals perceived them as competent.

- “Once I was on the post-natal ward I was pretty much left alone. As a third time Mum who was having no trouble breastfeeding I felt I was a low priority and as such a set of my daughters obs were missed and any time I needed anything it took a long time to get help.”
- “After moving to the ward I felt like we were left alone and not given as much information as with previous baby. This could be as it was my 2nd baby. I could have done with being seen by a breastfeeding support worker as baby had a tongue tie that wasn't picked up until 2 weeks later when health visitor was concerned he wasn't putting on weight.”

Mental health and wellbeing

Some mothers told us that the lack of mental health and emotional support from health professionals made them feel unsupported and left alone at an extremely emotional time.

- “The care I received after was difficult. The pain I was in was unbearable & getting pain relief was difficult. I was also very distressed & upset due to a previous loss, but this was also difficult for them to understand how I was feeling at the time.”
- “I felt very much unsupported. My child went to NICU and being an emotional wreck I felt like the midwives on Blakeney Ward did not care.”

Discharge from hospital

Several of the mothers felt that the discharge process was not right. Some felt they were discharged far too early, which left the mothers unprepared and babies at risk, and others were frustrated that it took so long to be discharged.

- “My discharge paperwork took 5 hours to be organised despite my discharge being planned the day before, now this resulted in a side room being used for an extra 5 hours, me requiring more meals and more analgesia. All at extra cost to the NHS. When I asked after 4 hours I was told she had been too busy, despite the ward being half full. So much for discharges being a priority for the hospital.”
- “I was discharged after 6 hours although I was heavily drowsy on pethidine, could hardly stand up, and had only fed my baby once with considerable help. This resulted in my baby being admitted as an emergency less than 24 hrs due to hypoglycaemia from failure to feed.”
- “Took 5 hours to get a box of Dalterparin despite the discharge letter being completed in the morning, very slow discharge process told at 3pm could go home left ward at 9pm.”
- “Not the best. Took forever to discharge us. After kept asking to go home as everything was fine! But took over 24 hours longer to go!!! Unacceptable.”

Post-birth visits from community midwives and health visitors

Some parents and carers told us that community midwives and health visitors are a great source of information and support, with many praising the advice they had received, such as information about local groups.

The support about parental mental health and wellbeing was praised, but several people found questions about their home life and environment (for example family finances and relationships) as being “intrusive”, “random” and “judgmental”.

- “I felt they asked really random questions, and felt quite judgmental. Questions about my relationship and dealing with arguments.”

- “One focused on my mental health and post-natal, she was very good. However, one asked intrusive questions about mine and my partners finance and family tree. We didn’t understand why it was relevant to be honest.”

Continuity of care

We asked: ‘There are different ways that we could care for pregnant women. Which of the following statements best reflects how you would like to be cared for if you were to have another baby? Please choose one answer.’

Statement	Number
I would be happy to be cared for by different midwives throughout my pregnancy, during labour and after I gave birth.	33
I would like to be cared for by the same midwife throughout my pregnancy and after birth. It wouldn't matter to me if the midwife who delivered my baby was different.	83
I would like to be cared for by a small team of midwives throughout my pregnancy, during labour and after I gave birth.	91
I would like to have a single midwife assigned to me throughout my pregnancy, who would be with me when I gave birth and support me afterwards.	52
I don't know	6

We received 265 responses to this question. The majority of the mothers said that their preference would be to either be cared for by a small team of midwives throughout pregnancy, birth and post birth, or to have one midwife care for them before and after birth. Frustration about having to explain one’s self repeatedly and ease of ability to express worries and concerns, were the common reasons why mothers said they would prefer to have the continuity of care from a small team.

I would like to have a single midwife assigned to me throughout my pregnancy, who would be with me when I gave birth and support me afterwards.

Parents and carers told us that when they have built-up a relationship with a midwife it has helped them feel more comfortable, less worried about things and more trusting of the professional caring for them.

Parents and carers who have seen quite a lot of different midwives don't like having to repeat their medical history. Quite a lot of people see this is a waste of time, frustrating or "a pain":

For some people though, such as parents and carers with mental health conditions, it is particularly difficult having to tell their story to lots of midwives and really important that each midwife understands their particular situation.

Some parents and carers suggested that continuity of care is more important for some families, for example vulnerable parents and those with more complicated pregnancies.

- "I think continuity of care is very important especially when pregnancies are complex and there are other factors effecting you emotionally it would be easier to not have to keep explaining your situation to different people all the time."
- "I suffer from a phobia that played a large part in my pregnancy and birth. This was in my birth plan, but I still had to explain it."
- "I spent my pregnancies building a relationship with my own midwife and it would've been nice to see a familiar face at hospital. I also wouldn't have had to explain certain things in my notes."

I would like to be cared for by the same midwife throughout my pregnancy and after birth. It wouldn't matter to me if the midwife who delivered my baby was different.

- "Reassuring to have the same person who is aware of medical history. Builds more trust if you see the same midwife."
- "I had Caroline Fox for all of my pre and post birth appointments. She really got to know me and my medical history which made every appointment easier because you didn't have to explain your history every time."

I would like to be cared for by a small team of midwives throughout my pregnancy, during labour and after I gave birth.

Some parents and carers said that they didn't think that having one midwife providing all care is particularly practical or realistic. This led some to suggest that having a small team of midwives to provide care was a "practical solution" as parents and carers could develop a relationship with a small number of midwives.

- "It's frustrating having to explain same things again & again. Would be better relationship as long as you got on with the midwives!"
- "A small team would be nice so you feel familiar with them. Also if you have any worries or concerns it's easier to talk to someone you have met before."

I would be happy to be cared for by different midwives throughout my pregnancy, during labour and after I gave birth.

Not everyone dislikes being cared for by different midwives. Some parents and carers value the different experience and advice that each midwife is able to offer. They don't mind being cared for by a team of midwives, if they are consistently good and particularly if it's a straightforward pregnancy.

- "I was seen by many midwives throughout my pregnancy, although my community midwife was the same, which was nice, but all midwives I saw were friendly, professional and helpful so I have no worries about seeing different ones during my next pregnancy."
- "I know as a nurse how shifts work and how the work load is much easier shared across a team."
- "In theory it would be nice to have the same midwife but they work shifts, have holidays, lives, some part time, so would be a logistical nightmare."

Partners

We received 15 responses to our survey from partners. Here is a summary of what they told us about their experience of having a baby in Norfolk and Waveney:

Care during pregnancy

There was a mix of opinions regarding the care that was received, with nine partners suggesting that the care was very good, when in contrast, six of the partners perceived their care to be very poor.

A few partners mentioned that midwives were either rude or disinterested in their views:

- “My wife found the regular midwife she saw at our GP practice to be somewhat disinterested, patronising and didn't seem to get hypnobirthing.”
- “Some were brilliant the other just came across as rude with no compassion.”
- “My other frustration is that midwives focus exclusively on the mother. Whilst I understand that midwives are busy and the mother is the priority, they must make more efforts to make dads feel involved. Fathers need to take care of their partners and they have responsibilities towards to their unborn children. Yet I was made to feel invisible. It sets completely the wrong tone when we want both parents to have equal responsibility from the day a baby is born.”

Partners who said they had received continuity of care and were able to form a relationship with their midwife, said that they care was good to excellent. They felt having a good relationship with their midwife helped to build a safe environment where the mother and partner felt comfortable to ask questions. Partners who saw lots of different midwives felt frustrated or confused.

- “Great. I had same midwife for most of pregnancy. She got to know us and built a great relationship where we felt safe asking any question at all.”
- “Half a dozen different midwives in the community. No real relationship built up...Better relationships and commitment need to be built.”
- “When you go for your booking in appointment you're told you will have named midwife and so you expect to see that midwife every time you go for an appointment. The reality is that you see lots of midwives. I have no problem seeing different midwives every time, as long as they are all good at their job. It would be better if you were told at your booking in appointment that you would see a few different midwives during pregnancy and after you

have your baby, so that your expectations match with the reality of the service.”

Care after giving birth

We asked partners what the care was like after birth. Whilst the general opinion of the partners was that the care the mothers received was good, there were some concerns about the information and advice provided, particularly about breastfeeding, as well as the discharge process.

- “Terrible, we were sent home with a baby that, hours later needed resuscitating in our bedroom and was then taken in an ambulance to A&E and then admitted to NICCU. We have suffered from the trauma ever since. Our baby had dangerously low blood sugars and had seizures. We told the midwives prior to leaving that we had concerns about her but they patronised us because we were new parents and ‘new parents always worry’. They were obsessed with ticking a breastfeeding target and getting rid of us (so it felt). I still feel they should have noticed our baby was vulnerable.”
- “Terrible, not enough staff to care or help, breast feeding repeatedly rammed down parents throats, advice contradicted by various staff, need just one or two dedicated breast feeding specialists not people dabbling and confusing mums and stressing them out, will lead to breast feeding failures.”

Some partners said that they didn’t like the wards, saying that they felt they lacked light and were cramped, which made families feel more stressed.

- “We were in a crowded ward, I had a chair to sleep on and could not use a shower after three days spent there. There was no natural light in the ward and it was distressing for the all family.”

Continuity of care

We asked: ‘There are different ways that we could care for pregnant women. Which of the following statements best reflects how you would like to be cared for if you and your partner were to have another baby? Please choose one answer.’

Statement	Number
I would be happy for care to be provided by different midwives throughout the pregnancy. It wouldn't matter to me if the midwife who delivered our baby was different to the midwife or midwives who provided care during pregnancy and after birth.	4
I would like care to be provided by a small team of midwives throughout the pregnancy, during labour and after birth.	4
I would like care to be provided by a single midwife throughout the pregnancy, for the same midwife to be there when the baby was born and to provide support afterwards.	5
I don't know	2

Five of the partners who responded to this question said that their preference would be to have a single midwife throughout pregnancy. Making the experience as personal and safe as possible was their main reason:

- “The inconsistency caused issues.”
- “Otherwise it will become an impersonal experience where the midwife is looking at the watch to see how long before she knocks off whilst your wife is in labour.”
- “It’s so much better if you know the midwife concerned and more importantly they know the mother. Birth is a personal experience which can’t be the same for everyone. If there was care from an individual midwife before, during and after birth, this would allow the safest, most natural route possible.”

Four people said their preference would be care from a small team of midwives, as this helps to build relationships and trust between parents and professionals:

- “Our experience of delivery was a poor one. There was a handover to a new midwife just at the point of delivery (a couple of hours before our baby was born). We were unable to form a relationship with that midwife and it effected the experience of the birth and made the labour more difficult.”
- “Get to know midwives- build relationship so feel that you can rely on them if things don’t go smoothly.”

Four partners said that having different midwives throughout pregnancy would be their preference, particularly for low risk births:

- “I think that there are some families who have more complicated situations and pregnancies who need extra support and more consistent care. However for straightforward pregnancies, the midwives just need to keep good records and be good at their job.”

Healthwatch Norfolk: Maternity Services in Norfolk

Over 2018, we have received **166 reviews** regarding maternity services in Norfolk. This relates to Children's centres, hospital services and community services (community midwives and health visitors). All reviews together resulted in an overall average star rating of **4.25 out of 5 stars**.

148 of the reviews were collected in the first six months of the year, due to work conducted specifically on maternity services in Norfolk. The **18** reviews collected during the second half of 2018 **all** relate to maternity services in hospitals.



Community services

73 reviewers shared their experiences of community midwives and health visitors. The most **frequently** mentioned areas were continuity of care and staff.

Continuity of care

54 reviewers spoke of the health care professionals they saw and how that experience was for them:

- 18 reviewers noted that they saw the same community midwife or health visitor (or couple of) for each appointment and this worked well for them as it provided some consistency, they built a relationship and were more likely to spot problems.
- 15 individuals explained that they didn't see the same health care professional each time and this wasn't good for them as they'd prefer to see the same person to ensure a continuity in relationship and issues are not missed.
- A further 11 explained that they didn't see the same community midwife or health visitor and this did not matter if they didn't have to explain everything from the beginning. Also, this was not an issue for them if there was a consistency in care received, the staff listened. Some even welcomed the differing expertise and opinions.
- 10 parents explained that they simply did not receive as many visits/appointments as they wished for, especially for first time and/or young mums, who felt there was not enough support there for them.

Staff

- Of the 25 reviews that mentioned staff attitudes, 20 were positive in nature explaining staff were “supportive”, “lovely” and a “lifeline”, with five being negative due to one rude staff member and four who were not supportive with issues around breastfeeding:
 - “I also think they are too pushy about breastfeeding.”
 - “I had one horrible one who shamed me about breastfeeding, which was unnecessary.”
- Two mentioned staffing levels as an issue as one had to travel to the hospital to see a midwife and another’s appointment got cancelled because there were not enough available.

Focus of the visits

- Community midwives and health visitors appeared to be a great source of information and advice with many praising the advice they had received, such as information about local groups (12)
- Parents seemed to praise the focus of parental mental health and wellbeing during the visits but several found the questions about the home environment (e.g. family finances, relationships etc) as being “intrusive”, “random” and “judgmental”.
 - “I felt they asked really random questions, and felt quite judgmental. Questions about my relationship and dealing with arguments.”
 - “One focused on my mental health and post-natal, she was very good. However, one asked intrusive questions about mine and my partners finance and family tree. We didn’t understand why it was relevant.”
- Three noted that tongue tie was not spotted by the health visitors for a while and the need for more training, with a further one saying that it was spotted quickly. Finally, the doctor identified tongue tie in one baby, but it was not cut for several weeks:
 - “Our daughters tongue tied was repeatedly missed. We asked various midwives about it in our home and they all said she’s alright and it was just that she wasn’t latching properly. They never even bothered to look in her mouth.”
 - “My child was tongue tied and the nurses didn't notice initially. This led to pain while breastfeeding. It was noticed and sorted after a while. I

think detection of tongue tied babies needs to be better but other than that it was a brilliant service. The nurses were great.”

- “The doctor did notice our baby was tongue tied at birth, but it wasn't cut there and then. He didn't breastfeed properly for a couple of weeks, and eventually he had his tongue cut. I didn't understand why it wasn't done sooner.”

Other points

- Post-birth, two reviewers noted that they were given an appointment day for their health visitor, but not a time slot so they would have to wait in all day.
- One mother noted that the community midwife was only available at her GP surgery one day a week, with the day being the same each week and this was difficult for her as it was the day she worked.

Hospital services

88 reviewers shared their experiences of maternity services within the three acute settings in Norfolk: The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals (NNUH) and James Paget University Hospital (JPUH).

Continuity of care

- Only two reviewers spoke specifically about continuity of care at the hospital and both said that they saw different consultants each time so “there wasn't any consistency” and “felt we were almost starting from scratch with giving information.”

Staff

- 56 reviewers spoke of the staff within the hospital setting with 47 praising them highly:
 - “The service I received was fantastic. The staff are really caring...”
 - “My daughter-in-law has just had a baby...The care has been fantastic! Very attentive to both mum and baby. Can't fault it.”
 - “I used the delivery suite, I had a quick birth, and all the staff were lovely.”
- Four noted negative experiences relating to staff where they were “insensitive” and “rude” relating to breastfeeding issues, one said staff didn't listen and one explained her experience where a consultant was rude and did not involve her in decisions about her treatment and care.

- Where most praised the staff highly, this usually came after explaining how busy or stretched they were or how there were not enough staff around (28). This often led to delays in receiving pain relief, information and discharge and was mentioned in reviews for QEH and NNUH:
 - “After giving birth it takes a long time to be discharged, because you have to wait for a midwife to sign you off. They are so busy that it can take 10+ hours.”
 - “Midwives are brilliant but there aren't enough of them. I had to be observed breastfeeding before I could be discharged. Every time my baby was ready to breastfeed I would call for a midwife, by the time they got there the baby wouldn't feed because it takes too long. It's not their fault, but it is an issue.”
 - “The only issues we had were waiting quite a while to be seen by nurses and midwives. They are obviously stretched and busy, but when you're in the hospital you need reassurance for worries and stuff.”
 - “My partner gave birth in the delivery suite. We had complications with the birth and she suffered blood loss. It was quite chaotic. More chaotic than our first child, the services are noticeably strained. We had issues like waiting a long time for pain relief. The staff really are great, it's just that they're stretched to their limits.”

Breastfeeding

- As mentioned above within staff attitudes, four noted negative experiences where staff members were “rude” or “insensitive”.
- Overall, 12 parents shared their experience post-birth about breastfeeding, with four explaining they felt pressure from the midwives to breastfeed:
 - “My only real issue is that I chose to bottle feed and felt very pressured to breastfeed. It feels like they are judging you for harming your baby by not breastfeeding. I think more support should be in place for women who choose not to breastfeed.”
- Five parents felt that there was a lack of support/advice, with a further two finding the advice to be inconsistent:
 - “Overall the maternity services were good. But my daughter felt like she didn't get enough support with breastfeeding. Her son wasn't latching, she felt isolated and it was stressful.”
 - “I had issues breastfeeding and they made me feel like it was my fault. It is an emotional time giving birth and their words can upset you.”
 - “I struggled with breastfeeding and was told three different ways I could do it by different midwives, each one told me the other way wasn't

great. It was confusing and frustrating and I was scared I couldn't feed."

Birth plans

- Birth plans were mentioned by six reviewers (four for JPUH and two for NNUH).
- For JPUH, there were mixed reviews. For one mother who was having her first child there was a birth plan in place; for one mother there was no birth plan at all and for two mothers, they had a birth plan but these were not written until 38 and 40 weeks, respectively, which one felt that this was "too late".
- For NNUH, one reviewer explained that their birth plan was respected during labour, however a second reviewer said that they did not have a birth plan in place.

Inductions

- Three people explained that they had long waits to be induced, as no beds were available:
 - "I was told to come in to the hospital to be induced. When I arrived, there were no beds available. I was waiting for a few hours and they told me I would have to wait until the next evening. I kicked up a fuss and they managed to find me a bed to be induced."
 - "I had to wait over 24 hours for a bed to be induced."
 - "I was booked in for an induction, when I arrived they told me I had to wait. I had to wait 13 hours..."
- One reviewer was induced, but had a c-section after three days and she "felt this could've been done sooner."

Environment/facilities

- JPUH: Two reviewers felt that Ward 11 was "outdated" and "unorganised"; one noted that "the facilities at the James Paget are really good."
- QEH: One mother had to sit in a corridor, whilst in labour, for 25 minutes.
- NNUH: Clay ward "is awful, and feels Victorian. I had no privacy at all"; the waiting area for scan appointments, "is so small that pregnant women were sitting or lying on the floor. You could be in the waiting rooms for hours after having a scan." and finally, one mother shared her experience that after birth she "was stuck in the birthing room with no chair and no bed for hours, which was uncomfortable."

Appointments

- Ten individuals noted appointments at the hospital, with two saying they were on time, two saying they were sometimes late and another saying they felt rushed.
- Two said that they had lots of appointments which was good for them, but one said that having three appointments in one week could have been “condensed into one or maybe two appointments”. Another said that she didn’t receive as many appointments for her second child as her first, but would like more as she said “you aren’t necessarily any more aware of issues.”
- One reviewer found that “often my appointments were booked wrong with consultants. I was having twins so I needed double slots, often not the case when I arrived.”
- One individual who lived in North Norfolk felt that consultant appointments at the NNUH were a long drive for them.

Visiting hours

- Several mothers found visiting hours difficult after birth as it meant that they felt that they didn’t see their partners enough or their partners had to leave:
 - “I found the visiting hours difficult, couldn’t see much of my husband.”
 - “I didn’t like that my partner had to leave at 9pm. I was on the ward on my own and couldn’t sleep at all.”
 - “My husband couldn’t stay with me overnight which I feel like I needed.”
 - “My first child they ended up inducing me on the ward at night, my partner was sent home and I delivered on the ward, it wasn’t a very nice experience”

Other points

- Maternity debrief was highly praised by one individual who felt this was a brilliant service and very reassuring.

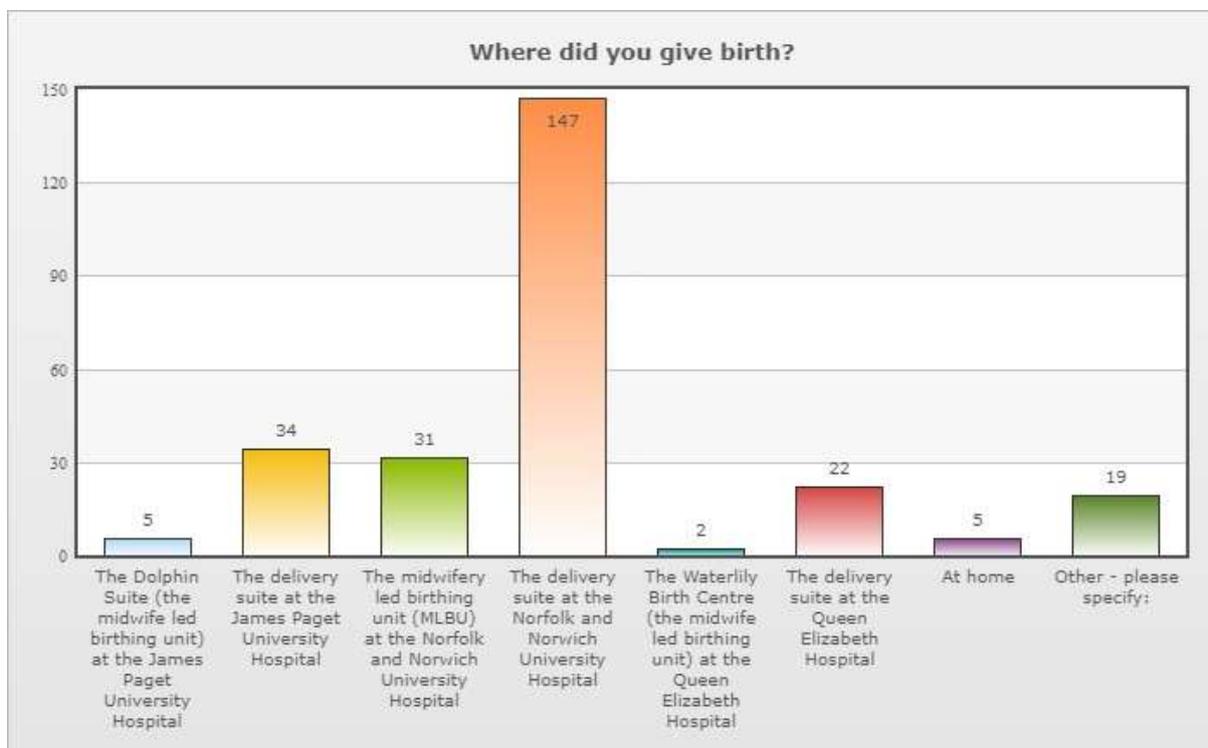
Children’s Centres

29 reviews related to Children’s Centres and reviewers were very positive about these. Many noted their great location given that they were in the local community, their range of services offered to new mums and the supportive and great staff who attended these sessions. The useful information and advice given at these centres were mentioned and others felt that these services gave parents a great opportunity to meet other local parents in the community, especially those in the same situation as themselves, therefore offering peer support. Many noted that it was a shame about the funding cuts - if these are to happen.

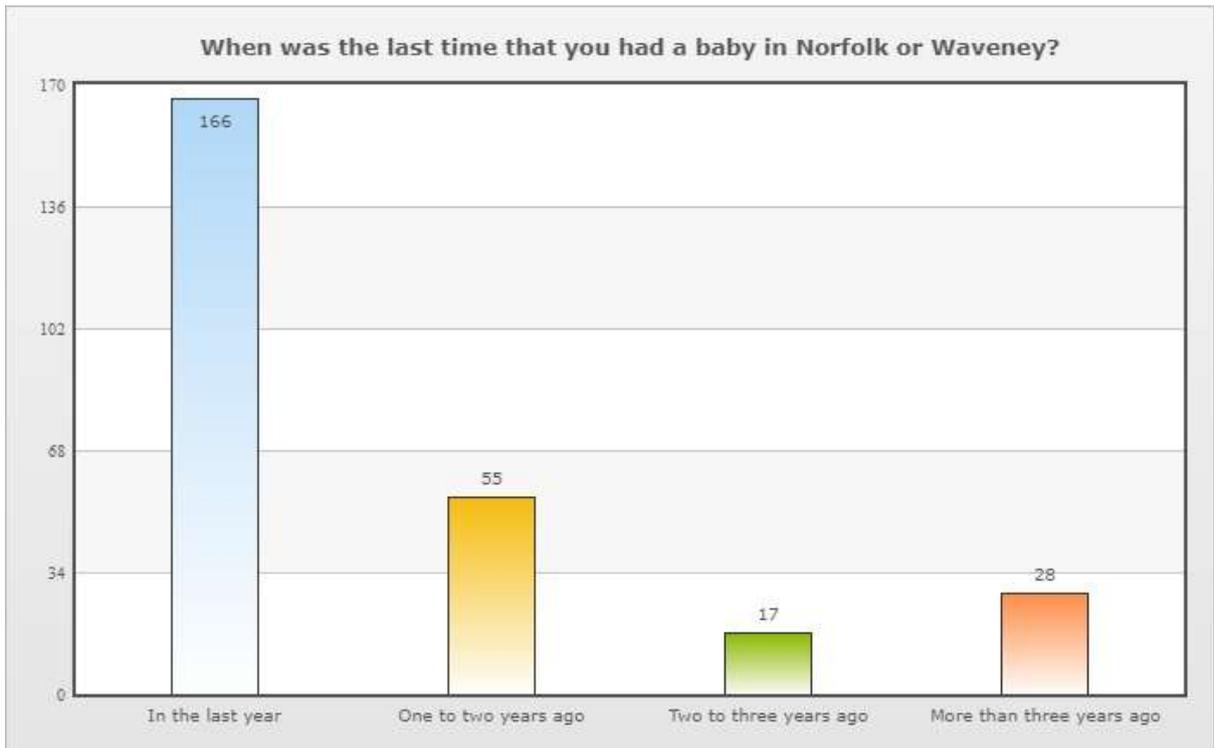
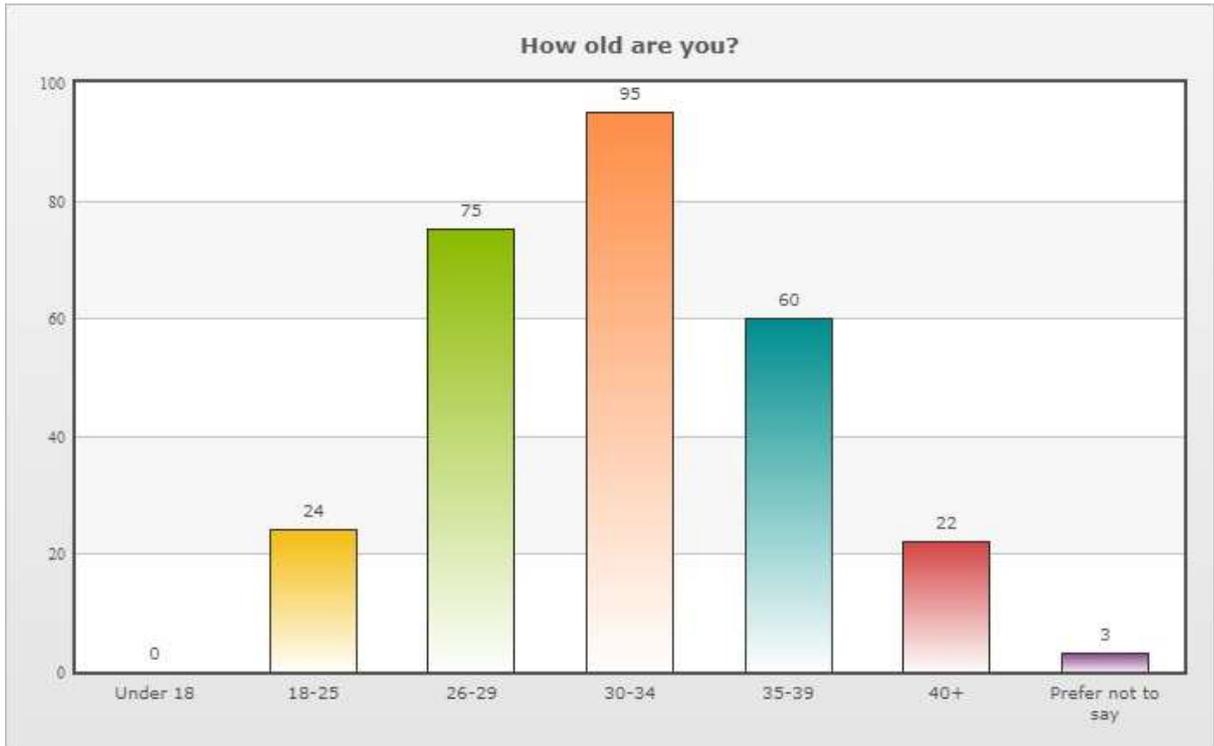
- “I initially attended the baby weigh session. It was fantastic, and it's a great way to meet lots of mums. I also attended post-natal groups. I would've been lost without them.”
- “I come to the drop-in sessions here at the centre. I think they're very good, staff will answer questions and check over my baby. I live close by and can walk in so it's easy to get to.”
- “I attended ante-natal classes and a post-natal course which lasted 8 weeks. It was very helpful and a great service. I also accessed breastfeeding support. I have heard about funding cuts to these centres, which will be a real loss.”
- “I have accessed the centre, they have a midwife drop-in. She is a breastfeeding specialist. I think it's amazing, and a life saver for new mums. It really helped me and it was free. It's good to get peer support from other mums too.”

Appendix A: Information about who responded to our online survey

We received 281 responses to our online survey, 266 of these were from mothers who had given birth and the remaining 15 came from fathers and partners. The majority of the mothers who responded were first time mums. Most of the mothers who responded to our survey gave birth at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital on the delivery suite, which is to be expected as it is the largest of the maternity units. The remaining mothers were spread out across Great Yarmouth's James Paget University Hospital, Kings Lynn's Queen Elizabeth Hospital and alternative birthing locations such as home births.



The graph below shows the age of the mothers who completed the questionnaire. Most of the feedback we received was from people aged 26-34 and most of the mothers who responded to our survey had had a baby in the last year.



15 people who completed our survey told us that they had a long term illness, disability or health problem that limits their daily activities and/or work.

Appendix B: Information about the baby and toddler groups visited by Healthwatch Norfolk

Healthwatch Norfolk visited the following baby and toddler groups between December 2017 and April 2018 to talk to parents and carers about their experience of having a baby:

- Bertie's Babies – Norwich – 7/12/17
- Dussindale Salvation Army – Norwich – 16/1/18
- Providence Street Mum and Baby Group – West Norfolk – 25/1/18
- Sheringham Salvation Army – North Norfolk – 29/1/18
- Dereham Baptist Church – South Norfolk – 31/1/18
- Chapel Break Toddler Group – Norwich – 5/2/18
- Magdalen Gates Primary School Parent Group – Norwich – 7/2/18
- Norwich Central Baptist Church – Norwich – 8/3/18
- Tea and Tots East Harling – South Norfolk – 13/3/18
- Tiny Tots – Great Yarmouth – 13/3/18
- Kings Centre Baby Group – Great Yarmouth – 27/3/18
- Fairstead Community Centre Baby Group – West Norfolk – 30/4/18