

Kate Faram – 13 February 2021

I would like to respond to the invitation for submissions from members of the public regarding the review of maternity services.

By means of background, I am a mother of two living in St. Clements, my first daughter was born in October 2018 and my second in December 2020, both at the General Hospital here in Jersey.

I would like to stress that both experiences were nothing short of wonderful, and I will be forever grateful to all at the antenatal clinic and the maternity ward for the outstanding level of care I have received. The staff are truly amazing individuals.

With regards to the points raised:

The appropriateness and adequacy of the current maternity facilities in the General Hospital and the planned upgrade

Admittedly the maternity ward is somewhat dated and could do with a refresh. The windows were drafty and the bathrooms potentially hazardous. I cannot imagine how hard it must be to use the showers if you've had a caesarean section or a birth with complications.

I did appreciate being able to use the bathroom and be so close to my sleeping baby, and that there was a toilet separate to the shower on the ward so if someone wanted to shower, there was still a toilet available.

The maternity facilities don't feel modern - it doesn't feel like a midwife led facility (even though I think it is), it feels very clinical. It would be nice to see the upgrade contributing to a calming empowering environment cultivated through physical premises as well as the current staff efforts. I think given the popularity of water births, it would be good if more facilities were available to accommodate this.

As someone who spent 5 nights on the ward when my first daughter was born, I have to say I disagree with people who advocate for partners being allowed to stay and more private rooms. I loved being on the ward as I felt I could more easily interact with the midwives and other people. It was less isolating. In addition, as I was breastfeeding, there was nothing my partner could do for me in the night so it was best that he went home and had some rest, whilst I was supported by the night shift team in learning how to feed my baby.

The availability and suitability of antenatal (including pregnancy loss) and perinatal mental health care

I was offered mental health support multiple times in pregnancy, not because I needed it but because the midwives wanted me to know the support was there if I wanted it. The message was communicated in a sensitive and caring manner.

Following the birth of my second child, I was supported by the midwives until day 14 as I had been very tearful. They let me know about the antenatal mental health care available and

stressed that I could access this at any time. I felt seen and cared for. I did not use this facility but believe that it is an excellent safety net in place for expectant / new mothers.

The safety and effectiveness of care delivered during antenatal (before birth), intrapartum (labour) and postnatal (after birth) stages of pregnancy

I could wax lyrical about all the midwives in Jersey. The level of care provided to me was second to none. I was at all times listened to and communicated to clearly, I was always asked if I had questions or had further things I wanted to discuss.

I believe the level of care throughout pregnancy is higher than that provided in the UK from conversations with friends and family. My birth preferences were acknowledged and respected. My fears were discussed without judgement. This led to me having two exceptionally positive birth experiences.

Whether women are able to make safe and appropriate choices about the maternity care that's right for them and their babies

Choices were presented to me at the earliest opportunity, and I was given time to reflect and discuss them. It was always made clear to me that I could change my mind at any time. I believe that the education provided to pregnant women is clear and expansive and permits informed decisions to be made with confidence.

How maternity services can be improved to meet the needs of families

No comments

The impact of Covid-19 on the provision of maternity services

I gave birth on Christmas Day 2020, as numbers of COVID-19 cases peaked on the island. As I am able to compare this to my first delivery in 2018, I can say that the impact of the pandemic on the provision of services was limited due to the efforts of the staff. My partner was not permitted at my 12 week scan or subsequent growth scans but we both felt that in the grand scheme of things, this was not a big deal.

The actual birth itself was not impacted, the only difference was that people in the room were wearing masks but that had no impact on me or my ability to communicate with them. My partner was allowed to stay with me until I went to the ward and had I had to stay longer, would have been able to visit. As it was we were discharged the next day.

I find it irksome that people would complain about giving birth in the current circumstances, the restrictions help keep the antenatal clinic and maternity ward safe whilst continuing to deliver outstanding levels of care. Both agendas being of equal importance. At the end of the day, if a safe and healthy delivery is achieved then being permitted to have lots of visitors or not (as an example) shouldn't be heavily focused on.