

Yvette Jones (NCT) – 10 March 2021

I see parents antenatally and postnatally, and always ask for feedback. Taking on board what they're come back with I have collated these comments and opinions over the past 5 years:

\*The current maternity facilities leave much to be desired. They are felt to be old fashioned, shabby, unwelcoming and uncomfortable. The showers get a lot of mentions- in the hallway with no proper door for privacy. The provision for Partners is poor. No lavatory for them to use, no food or drink. This lack of provision for their needs can make them feel rather unwelcome and "surplus to requirements".

\* The availability of mental health care is perceived to be good, once accessed, but signposting in advance would be more helpful.

\*Antenatal care is usually fed back as being good or very good. Both Doctors and Midwives are seen to be approachable and patient, although a lack of consistency of different midwives at every appointment is seen to be a missed opportunity for joined up care and lower stress levels for parents. Less so the antenatal ultrasound staff. There is regular feedback of being made to feel "told off" and "fears dismissed".

Intrapartum is generally fed back well-being although- "I dont think any mother should not have her views heard/wishes respected" was one comment. Most clients report positive experiences, but a significant minority feel that they were not listened to. The de brief service offered is a good thing.

Postnatal care has generally good reviews. Parents felt able to ask for support. The community midwives are held in high esteem. One point that is often raised however is the huge range of different and inconsistent advice offered which can leave new parents somewhat bewildered, and the often perceived over enthusiastic promotion of breast feeding. Working in line with UNICEF recommendations on breast feeding is acknowledged, but there is regular feedback of feeling pressured and judged if breastfeeding is not the chosen path.

Most woman have positive experiences in maternity, and that seems to be largely down to the kind and competent care of the midwives and obstetricians. Occasionally clients feel that they have to "push hard" to have their wishes acted upon. As detailed above, this is not the experience of many birth partners, ( due to the set up- not the attitudes). More attention to their needs and acknowledgement of their importance would be welcomed.

\* There is felt to be a good range of antenatal education choices, although unfortunately these are not always fully explained. Possibly midwives are not aware of all the options, and that is a shame. The take up of antenatal education and attendance of appointments and clinics are crucial in enabling women and partners to make informed choices about their care and is felt to be very important amongst my clients.

The maternity unit is felt to be reasonably well staffed during the day, although many clients felt that nights were a different story with the few staff seen to be very busy and stretched. However there is appreciation of being allowed to stay in hospital following the birth until well and confident enough to go home.

"I felt very well looked after from antenatal classes through delivery. In the end I need a Caesarean section but everyone involved was superb and kept me very well informed"

I think that this quote, taken from a clients feedback, sums up the prevalent attitude that I see when I chat to expectant and new parents in the majority of cases.