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Supporting the wellbeing of mums: Survey of mothers, mothers to be and healthcare professionals

The health watchdog has today released a report that talks about a mother's journey through pregnancy and how health services and professionals have interacted and provided support to mothers and mothers to be.

The report found that over three quarters of mums stayed in hospital overnight after giving birth, with two thirds of those saying that their partners were not given the option to stay with them.

Mums told Healthwatch about the vulnerability they experienced in the immediate hours after giving birth. They expressed a feeling of abandonment, especially those mums who were not allowed to have their partners stay with them. Just over half of mums said that they could have been better supported emotionally.

Chris Faircliffe, Healthwatch Leicestershire Board member said:

"Supporting mums emotionally is important for their future wellbeing. In our report, we have not only provided information about support services, but we have also collated a 'Top tips for new mums', that is aimed at providing words of comfort from other mums, in their own words".

The issue of improvements around maternity services is a national one. Earlier this year, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) launched a national campaign called #Yourbirthplan, aimed at raising awareness of CQC amongst women who are pregnant, planning to have a baby or have recently used maternity services in England.

A National Maternity Review: Better Births - Five Year Forward View for NHS maternity services in England, recognised that delivering a vision for maternity services could only be delivered through locally led transformation, suitably supported at national and regional levels.

Healthwatch Leicestershire found that many healthcare professionals thought there should be greater or more effective sharing of information with over three quarters of healthcare professionals saying there 'definitely or very much so' could be better information sharing between Public Health Nurses and Midwives.

Rick Moore, Chair of Healthwatch Leicestershire said:

"The agenda item in all strategic conversations has to be 'a joined-up approach'. That is the direction of the healthcare system on a whole and maternity services in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are no different. We must make sure that at a local level, we are working smarter together and that our local Trusts are doing everything they can to support mothers and their families".

Healthwatch Leicestershire has dedicated a page in the report to highlight the positive comments that were received when gathering feedback, with one mother saying,

“Excellent, staff, though they were short of staff, the exchange of midwives was great and the level of care I was given was truly excellent”.

Elaine Broughton, Head of Midwifery at Leicester’s Hospitals said:

“We will combine the findings of the report with the results of the CQC national maternity survey and consider how we can address the recommendations to improve the birth experience for the women and their families.”

A statement from Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust said,

“We welcome any opportunity to explore the experiences of families and health professionals within our 0-19 public health programme, Healthy Together. We have just completed a period of mobilization for this new service across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, based on co-design with local families. The voice of families and their experience remains central to our ethos.

We are committed to working closely with our midwifery colleagues at UHL to ensure there is seamless support for the health of new and expectant mothers. We are proud of the public health role our teams play, and with the recent introduction of our new Health for Under 5s website* and Chathealth secure messaging for parents, the accessibility of our service has been further strengthened. We look forward to discussing learnings from Healthwatch’s report with our staff, with midwifery colleagues and with Healthwatch to ensure we all provide the best possible service for families.” *www.healthforunder5s.co.uk

Healthwatch Leicestershire will sit down with senior managers at University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust and Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust to share the findings in more detail.

The full report can be found on the Healthwatch Leicestershire website at <http://www.healthwatchleicestershire.co.uk/reports>

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Editor notes

About Healthwatch Leicestershire

Healthwatch Leicestershire is an independent consumer champion for health and social care in Leicestershire. The organisation helps to shape and improve local health and social care in our community. Healthwatch Leicestershire is part of the Healthwatch national network, established by the Government to ensure local patients and users have a greater input to shaping and designing local services. www.healthwatchleicestershire.co.uk

About Healthwatch England

Healthwatch England is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in England. The organisation has independent statutory powers, as stated in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure the consumers’ voice is heard and best practice is delivered in health and social care nationally. Healthwatch is also focused on providing leadership, guidance and support to the development of the Healthwatch network. To find out more please go to www.healthwatch.co.uk.