

Kettering General Hospital Maternity Enter and View

June 2023



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Acknowledgements

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire are grateful for the time, efforts and cooperation of Kettering General Hospital. We appreciate the ability to be allowed into the Maternity Facilities to evaluate and assess the premises, as well as being able to speak with staff and patients to better understand their experiences. Thank you to our volunteers for their hard work and time they dedicated to gathering the data and valuable information needed for this enter and view. Special thanks to our volunteers Sheila White and Wendy Patel, as well as Paula Anderson the Lead Professional Midwife Advocate/Obstetrics & Gynaecology – Family Health Division at Kettering General Foundation Trust Hospital.

Background and Purpose

Healthwatch aims to conduct regular evaluations of selected healthcare services within the community. Conducting these reviews help us to directly support and give valuable feedback to services that have been identified as needing focus. Our investigations result in our service making recommendations for ways that service providers can continue to provide effective and satisfactory care. Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire's aim with this Maternity visit was to evaluate the services being provided within Kettering General Hospital, which included visits to the Screening Unit, the Delivery Suite, Rowan Ward, and the Snowdrop Garden. The last Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection was in 2019 where the service was rated as 'Good'. This was kept in mind during the visit as this was some time ago and services can change during that length of time.

Methods

The approach used to assess the services and feedback from the service users for this Maternity services visit was a method known as the “15 Steps Challenge”. The “15 Steps” method is an audit tool kit developed by the NHS in 2012 which is used to look at the quality of the services that are provided from the perspective of the service users, in this case those who use maternity services¹. This framework was designed to help organisations look for new ways to transform the way that the work is being handled, with the “15 Steps” being used to challenge how programmes are being run and allowing for recommendations and improvements to be made. The term “15 Steps” is used to refer to the concept of taking 15 physical steps within a location, and from those 15 steps, the theory is that the individual would then be able to gather a brief yet impactful impression of the location’s environment and structure. “The 15 Steps Challenge” targets the methodology in line with NHS strategic drivers and addresses the following criteria within an establishment:

- Welcoming
- Safe
- Caring and involving
- Well-organised and calm

However, “15 Steps” is not always literally 15 physical steps, and is more representative of the act of immersing oneself in the centre of a location, whether it be a hospital unit or a clinic. The first step is to identify those who are conducting the “15 Steps” and which partners are collaborating to make this happen. The next step was to use the tool kit to support the walk around to get a comprehensive understanding of how the locations, in this instance the maternity wards, were operating. By walking around, observing the surroundings of the maternity wards, speaking, and asking questions to both staff and patients, Healthwatch was able to get an understanding of how the service was functioning. This allows Healthwatch to highlight the positives and the elements of the service that appear to be effective, as well as reflecting on what can be improved. These findings were documented and summarised by our volunteers and are included within this report. After the report is finalised, a copy of the report is sent to service commissioners and providers, who are given the opportunity to respond to the recommendations made and their comments are included later in this report.

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/15-steps-inpatient.pdf>

Summary

On the 2nd of May 2023, two volunteers from Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire (HWNW) visited Kettering General Hospital (KGH) Maternity Department to carry out a '15 Steps for Maternity' audit. This audit looks at the quality of services provided from the perspective of people who use maternity services. The volunteers were shown around the clinics by Paula Anderson the Lead Professional Midwife Advocate/Obstetrics & Gynaecology within the Family Health Division at Kettering General NHS Foundation Hospital Trust. This was our second attempt at a visit. The first visit arranged was also to be attended by a colleague from the Maternity Voices Partnership, however, this had to be abandoned as there was no parking available on the day.

KGH Maternity ward was last visited by the Clinical Quality Commission in May of 2019, the inspection of maternity services was carried out as part of a national inspection: the preliminary report produced after their inspection gave a finding of 'Good' for the service. The service was found to be satisfactory and the staff understood how to protect patients from risk, and kept themselves and their patients safe through satisfactory measures and care. KGH invited HWNW to visit and provide a '15 steps for Maternity' assessment, aiming at gathering new insight into ways in which the service can improve. Our volunteers posed three topics they felt needed to be addressed during the visit based on the CQC report²; The seven safety actions related to the perinatal surveillance model, the unavailability of staff causing delays in induction of labour, and maternal mental health issues.

On the day of the visit, the Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire volunteers went to the Screening Unit and Fetal Health, Delivery Suite, and Rowan Ward. The information gained from the visit was used to make some recommendations, and areas in which the service was providing quality care were acknowledged.

²<https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/RNQ51/inspection-summary#npimaternity>

Findings from the Maternity Wards

Fetal Health Unit and Screening Department

Within Fetal Health and Screening Department, there is a main waiting area, with comfortable seating and information boards relevant to the area. An Ante Natal Assessment board gave comprehensive information on how to access services and help in several different languages and how to access the translation service if needed. We noted that this is a good example of accessible information being provided to patients. There was also information about infection control on the board. Within the unit, there was information about induction of labour and reduced foetal movement, information about foetal monitoring, as well as information about the dangers of Covid during pregnancy.

The space is welcoming and exhibits a warm feeling for patients and their families. Northampton Sands, a Charitable Organisation, had donated funding to furnish a small quiet room. The quiet room allows for a private space for women/birthing people to be counselled if any screening anomalies or concerns have been identified.

There is a Screening Team of staff to support the needs of the unit. The Lead Midwife of Foetal Medicine is in the area to provide support if needed. For example, if the patient needs to see a consultant or perhaps a member of the chaplaincy team, this can be arranged through the Lead Midwife. During the visit, our volunteers were introduced to a recently qualified member of staff who confirmed that she had an experienced member of staff as her mentor. We had previously been informed that money has been allocated for a preceptorship post.

There is a small office adjacent to the Quiet Room where administrative work is undertaken to record patient details. Contact details relevant to the area are clearly displayed. Occasionally blood tests are needed, and there is provision for these to be taken on-site.

Delivery Suite

The route to the Delivery Suite signage is displayed clearly in several languages to help reduce the stress for patients and their families. Our volunteers were introduced to the coordinator who is responsible for organising the team, and for

the day-to-day workflow of the whole unit. She told us that a lot of her learning had been 'on the job', practical experience. The staff in this area are on duty 24/7 with a minimum number of two coordinators at any one time, this ensures the needs of the suite are in order and that the proper staff are assigned to the necessary tasks and patient needs. We learned that the Operational Matron works five shifts a week. There is also a Ward manager of the area and out of hours, a manager on call is accessible for further advice/guidance if required.

There are notice boards present within the delivery suite and they gave information on Infection Control and the Cleanliness Rating of the area. Within the unit there is a Triage Bay for assessments. Our volunteers spoke with staff and were told that due to the staffing crisis in the NHS, that nationally people are leaving the profession, giving insight into the staffing crisis that is ever present within the hospital system³. We asked the staff if there have been any delays in the induction of labour due to a lack of staff, the Matron Lead of the Department explained that they have introduced measures to be open and to have honest conversations with patients about any potential delays in deliveries and labour inductions.

Snowdrop Garden

The Snowdrop Garden is accessed via the Bereavement Suite and is situated in one of the courtyard garden areas between ward buildings and is a peaceful area of remembrance for families experiencing compassionate inductions or whose babies have been stillborn or lost soon after birth. This provides a quiet space for both bereaved parents and their visitors to use when needed. For protection and consideration for all concerned the windows facing the courtyard along an adjoining corridor are blanked out, providing additional seclusion and privacy.

Rowan Ward

The Rowan Ward consists of 8 bays and 3 single rooms, with a further room allocated for NIPE examinations and to facilitate intimate examinations, providing dignity and privacy for women, a day room, and there is ample signage and information for patients to access. On entering this area our volunteers noted

³ <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/nhs-staffing-shortages>

that the notice boards contained a wide display of information. This information included:

- Welcome Message
- Numerous 'Thank You' cards, which they said they valued
- Information about parking and visiting times
- Information about the 15 Steps Challenge Audits
- Maternity Voices
- The Staff Team/number of staff on duty
- The Fire Officer is identified daily and is responsible for the whole Rockingham Wing area.
- Education and Training Opportunities
- Staff Uniforms
- KGH Values
- First and latent stages of labour
- Sepsis
- PALs – compliments and complaints

The Day Room is spacious and attractively set out. The Infant Feeding Coordinator has constructed a comprehensive amount of information which is displayed, including infant feeding and hand-expressed milk. The information was clearly set out with writing and illustrations which gave a better understanding of the process. Healthwatch England's information on Mental Health is regularly updated so that patients can access current information. Water and Coffee are available for patients and their families. The room has several small tables with appropriate seating. On one table there was a book for the mothers who had given birth to leave messages of support and give encouragement to mothers of the yet-to-be and newly born babies.

Community Midwives

Our volunteers enquired about the Community Midwifery Programme. There are Community Midwives Teams based in Kettering, Corby, and Wellingborough. Within the Community Teams, there are also two continuity of care teams who prioritise caring for those women most at risk of a poor outcome, this includes women from a BAME background and those living within our areas of deprivation. All the midwives are employed by Kettering General Hospital and have a base in the community. At the time of the visit, the Kettering Community Service had been given notice that their current premises were to close on the

3rd of July, they have since been able to move to a new venue within the town centre (Prospect House) and they achieved the move with minimal disruption to patients.

What People Told Us

We spoke with staff and patients within the Maternity Unit at KGH to ensure that we gathered a comprehensive understanding of their experiences and feedback both working in and being patients within the Unit.

Service User Feedback

Two mothers with newly born babies and one pregnant woman were spoken to by our volunteers. The first woman had been admitted to the Maternity Ward a few days prior to her delivery so her delivery would be monitored due to her diabetes. Her newborn was delivered safely, and they were being kept in the hospital until she was cleared for discharge, however, she said that she was being kept informed by staff and was likely to return home the following day.

Service User 1: *"Everything has gone to plan during my birth, I am happy with the support I have received from the maternity staff"*

The second mother had just given birth to their child. She was happy with the support from the staff and her experience was good.

Service User 2: *"I have been given very good support from the staff and my stay has been comfortable and relaxing. My pregnancy journey has been very good."*

The third person was currently pregnant, we spoke to her as she was walking along the corridor, and she appeared to be relaxed and well.

Service User 3: *"I feel comfortable as if I was at home"*

Staff Comments

We spoke with staff members in all the areas we visited, and we found that overall staff felt supported and were happy with their duties and roles within KGH. We noted that staff were readily available when needed and this was confirmed by the patients to whom we spoke to. We feel that KGH's philosophy of 'We strive to make you and your family the centre of our care' was achieved within the Maternity Division.

Staff 1: "I am very happy in my job, and I feel that I get support when I need it"



Key Findings

Positives

- Overall, the staff appeared friendly and helpful and gave the impression that they are dedicated to their jobs and care for the patients.
- Staff commented that they felt supported by their co-workers, and senior leadership.
- The environment within the ward was clean and safe, with staff maintaining the expected sanitary requirements.
- The visual environment was found to be welcoming and well-decorated. The décor was pleasant and made patients feel at home and overall, it attributed to their enjoyment of their stay.
- The information boards within the unit were used efficiently and we were satisfied with the amount of information available.
- We found the information to be accessible and key informative materials were offered in multiple languages, demonstrating inclusivity.

Challenges

- We noted that the short notice closure of the Kettering Maternity Midwives Base has been a major challenge, however, there are three community midwifery hubs, one at Woodsend Medical Centre in Corby, One at Isebrook in Wellingborough and the new hub at Prospect House in Kettering which supports women to access the services local to their community.
- Due to the lack of staff availability at times, there can be a delay in continuing labour inductions, however the maternity service is able to risk assess and ensure that safety is paramount in any decisions made.
- The overall lack of parking is noted as a challenge because of the effects it has on all patients and visitors.

Recommendations

Staff Shortage

We understand the difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, and although the Maternity Unit is running smoothly in terms of enough staff on the floor, we do feel that this staff shortage can, at times, cause delays in labour induction, and we recommend those open and honest conversations continue to be had with expecting mothers who may be affected by this delay.

KGH Parking

We encountered an issue with parking, as the first arranged Maternity visit from our volunteers was unable to be conducted. This was due to a lack of parking available, and unfortunately, our volunteers had to abandon the visit and reschedule. We feel this is a barrier for patients and visitors and needs to be reviewed by KGH, as the consequences may be seen in patients not showing up for scheduled appointments, consequentially wasting NHS resources and people's time. We recommend that planning and development officers of KGH review the need for additional parking, and that funding be allocated to improve the number of parking spaces available to patients and visitors.

Commissioner and Provider Responses

We welcome the feedback that Healthwatch have provided to us and are extremely proud of the services we provide to women, birthing people, and their families. It is very important to us that we listen to our service users to enhance our facilities we offer on the feedback that we receive.

Since the visit, we are proud to assure our service users that staff recruitment and retention is a high priority to us, and we aspire to follow our new Maternity unit philosophy:

As a service, we strive to achieve Compassionate, Inclusive, Personalised care for Women and Birthing People whilst nurturing a happy and supportive environment for staff.

We are aware that parking is limited at our hospital, and this has become even more of a problem since the bus routes in the area changed. We are working on solutions to this problem, including:

- Expanding our parking with the construction of a new multi-deck carpark
- Working with the council to improve public transportation options to and from the hospital.

We know that these solutions will not solve the problem overnight, but we are committed to making progress. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we work to address this issue.

15 Steps Summary

Welcoming and Informative

On our entering the Maternity Department we were greeted by Paula Anderson the Lead Professional Midwife Advocate/Obstetrics & Gynaecology of the Family Health Division at KGH. Paula was friendly and informed. All staff we met were very friendly and approached us in a nice manner.

The notice boards seen throughout the units in the Maternity Ward were all found to be satisfactory. The boards were full of helpful information, were kept regularly up to date so that the most current guidance was provided to patients, they provided available services, relevant guidance and information that was made available to patients. We found the notice boards, and information on display throughout the units to be inclusive to those whose first language is not English.

In the HWNW visit of 2019, we noted that the use of posters and notice boards was sufficient and that there was evidence of inclusivity and language awareness, we feel this has been kept up to standard and has been continued to be prioritised. We recommended in 2019 that the roles and uniforms of staff were complicated and inconsistent- we noted that it has been improved as our volunteers had no issue identifying staff members and their roles and name tags were clear.

Overall, we found the feedback to be positive, with patients feeling welcomed within the ward and generally feeling comfortable and relaxed. We felt that all the necessary measures were taken to ensure that patients and families had access to information regarding their care.

Friendly and Personal

It was evidenced by our visit that the staff were dedicated individuals who cared about the people they looked after. The staff were friendly and the patients felt as though the treatment they received from the staff was pleasant and their communication with patients to be thorough. Staff expressed that they were content with their jobs. The service users and families in the labour wards who were interviewed praised the staff for the service and care with which they had received.

Safe and Clean

The Maternity Unit was noted to be clean and sanitary in all units we visited, our volunteers noted that hand gel was available in all the areas and that the environment was clean and tidy. During our visit, we were informed that we were no longer required to wear a face mask within the areas we would visit, which is reflective of the change in safety mandates from the pandemic. Staff had visible ID badges. There appear to be adequate hand-cleansing provisions and suitable disposal bins in all areas. We saw staff using the hand cleansing dispensers, indicating that staff are taking the necessary measures to maintain the necessary levels of environmental safety.

Although the buildings are dated, every effort has been made to make the area attractive and welcoming. We found the units to be decorated well, and have benefited from the donations and funding received from Northampton Sands to help in purchasing furnishings and decorations for bereaved parents. All informational and educational materials were displayed effectively throughout the units through the use of notice boards and posters and leaflets.

Organised and Calm

The units visited within the Maternity Ward were calm and orderly, and the patients and staff did not appear to be under stress. The environment within the units makes for a space that feels warm and welcoming. The patients we spoke to were calm and relaxed and content with the care they were receiving. Staff felt satisfied with their jobs and their designated tasks within the unit. Staff leadership are doing a good job at keeping staff organised and their designated tasks and priorities are well understood.

The Snowdrop Garden caters to the needs of bereaved patients for a quiet and pleasant outdoor environment. The dedicated space serves for a peaceful remembrance of those infants lost during or after birth, we feel this was done in a sensitive way.

About North and West Northamptonshire Healthwatch

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and well-being and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to monitor (known as "Enter and View") health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care.
- We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision-makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement.
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, and to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using many different ways to discover views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.

Where we feel that the views and voices of Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire and the people whom we strive to speak on behalf of are not being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.

Find out more at www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

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About Connected Together

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire.

The remit of the Connected Together CIC includes:

- Contract compliance
- Legal requirements
- Financial and risk management
- Sustainability and growth
- Agreeing strategy and operations
- Agreeing policies and procedures



Connected Together CIC is a social enterprise and a partnership between the University of Northampton and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. It aims to be first for community engagement across the county of Northamptonshire and beyond.

By using our expertise and experience, we can help you in delivering community engagement programmes including workshops, research, surveys, training and more. Contact us to find out how we can help your community.

We welcome ideas and suggestions for projects that benefit Northamptonshire and its community.

Find out more at www.connectedtogether.co.uk



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