



# 15 Steps Maternity 'Virtual Visit' Northampton and Kettering General Hospitals

July 2020





# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Summary.....  | 3  |
| National Guidance .....                                   | 4  |
| Kettering General Hospital .....                          | 5  |
| Delivery Suite (Labour ward) .....                        | 5  |
| Rowan ward (Postnatal) .....                              | 7  |
| Northampton General Hospital.....                         | 10 |
| Sturtridge Labour ward .....                              | 10 |
| Robert Watson Ward (Postnatal) .....                      | 13 |
| Conclusion.....   | 16 |
| What worked well Kettering General Hospital .....         | 16 |
| Recommendations Kettering General Hospital .....          | 16 |
| What worked well Northampton General Hospital .....       | 16 |
| Recommendations .....                                     | 16 |
| Response from Kettering General Hospital .....            | 17 |
| Response from Northampton General Hospital .....          | 17 |
| Thanks and Acknowledgements .....                         | 18 |
| About Healthwatch Northamptonshire .....                  | 19 |
| About Northamptonshire Maternity Voices Partnership ..... | 20 |
| About Connected Together .....                            | 21 |
| Contact us.....   | 22 |



## Summary

**Volunteers from Northamptonshire's Maternity Voice Partnership (MVP) and Healthwatch Northamptonshire conducted a virtual 15 Steps Visit<sup>1</sup> of the labour and postnatal wards at Northampton General Hospital and Kettering General Hospital on 30 June 2020.**

This was a follow up of the visits that took place in April 2019<sup>2</sup> and was requested by the Local Maternity and Neonates System Board (LMNS)<sup>3</sup>.

The visit took place in the midst of the Coronavirus (Covid-19)<sup>4</sup> pandemic. Due to the pandemic there were a number of restrictions in place across the country and in hospitals. It was decided that the safest way to conduct the visits was using cameras to record the visits virtually, to both ensure the safety of volunteers and staff that were conducting the visit and also not put any extra pressure on the hospitals. The visits were undertaken using Microsoft Teams and at a staff member's work phone (at Kettering General Hospital) or laptop (at Northampton General Hospital). This was the first time that Healthwatch Northamptonshire or either hospital had conducted a 15 Steps Visit in this way.

All of the volunteers that took part had been trained in how to conduct a 15 Steps visit and had been involved in previous physical 15 Steps Visits to both hospitals so were familiar with the process. Healthwatch Northamptonshire hosted an online meeting with the volunteers a week before the virtual visits to update on training and address any possible concerns about conducting the visits virtually.

A debrief meeting with volunteers took place after the virtual visits to discuss the limitations of doing a virtual 15 Steps visit, such as the inability to talk directly to other staff and patients.



<sup>1</sup> The 15 Steps Challenge focuses on seeing care through a patient or carer's eyes, and exploring their first impressions: [www.england.nhs.uk/participation/resources/15-steps-challenge/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/participation/resources/15-steps-challenge/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/fifteenstepsmaternityNGH](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/fifteenstepsmaternityNGH),  
[www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/fifteenstepsmaternityKGH](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/fifteenstepsmaternityKGH)

<sup>3</sup> [www.northamptonshirematernityservices.co.uk/about-us](http://www.northamptonshirematernityservices.co.uk/about-us)

<sup>4</sup> [www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)



## National Guidance

At the time of the visits the Government guidance on social distancing was in place. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care had announced on 5 June that

“By 15 June 2020:

- hospitals should ensure that measures are in place so that all settings are, where practicable, COVID-secure, using social distancing, optimal hand hygiene, frequent surface decontamination, ventilation and other measures where appropriate
- in all settings that are unable to be delivered as COVID-19 secure, all hospital staff (both in clinical and non-clinical roles), when not otherwise required to use personal protective equipment, should wear a facemask; worn to prevent the spread of infection from the wearer
- visitors and outpatients to hospital settings should wear a form of face covering for the same reason, to prevent the spread of infection from the wearer

The extended use of face masks does not remove the need for other key bundles of measures to reduce the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, including social/physical distancing, optimal hand hygiene, frequent surface decontamination, ventilation and other measures where appropriate.”





## Kettering General Hospital

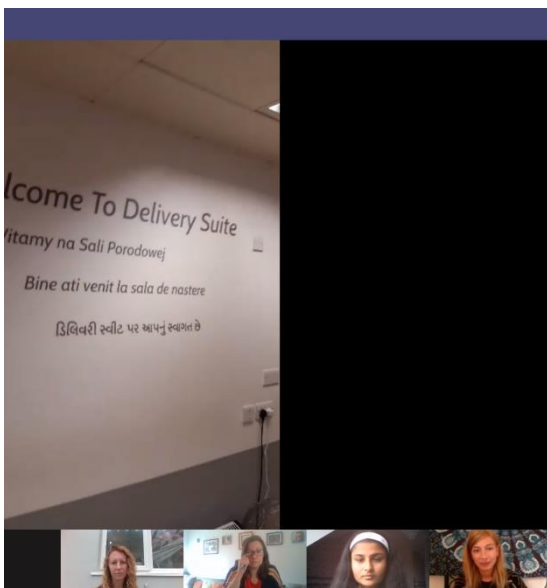
At Kettering General Hospital we were shown around by Nicola, the Matron for Patient Safety and Experience. She did the tour using Microsoft Teams and her work mobile phone.

On arrival to the Rockingham Wing there were posters on the outside of the doors to remind visitors about Covid-19 guidance and visitor restrictions. There were social distancing dots on the floor inside the entrance which led to a table with some forms on. It was explained that these forms were for people entering the ward to fill in about any symptoms that they may be experiencing and that there was a separate form for birth partners with more symptoms included. It felt very different to how one would usually enter a hospital but reassuring to see Covid-19 being taken seriously. There was hand sanitiser available and a station for temperature checks. There was also another similar station for staff to be screened when they arrived at work and they would be sent home if they had a temperature. There were more notices around regarding Covid-19 about symptoms and PPE.

### Delivery Suite (Labour ward)

#### Welcoming and informative

Outside of the labour ward there was a poster to remind people about the use of face masks and a call bell to press to enter the ward but we were swiped in by Nicola. There was also a reminder about visitors to the unit, the message that visitors were restricted was made clear, it seems unlikely that someone would miss it and be surprised by this information later on.



The ward was well signed and when we reached the reception desk, we were pleased to see a “Welcome” sign above the maternity reception desk which had ‘welcome’ in several different languages. There were also lots of leaflets and other signage around the ward which were in the most common languages spoken by people coming into the hospital. This inclusive gesture ensures all people going into labour are met with some familiarity during a stressful time.

The corridors we were walked through had ample space and were kept clear; there was minimal equipment left on the sides and it looked like there was lots of space for people to walk by and not bump into each other or equipment. The area looked tidy, it was not cluttered and equipment appeared to be stored neatly with cords away.

There was a board with information on mental health in pregnancy, the Eden continuity teams<sup>5</sup>, breastfeeding news and various other leaflets, some leaflets were available in other languages. Overall, it was presented nicely and everything looked clean.

There were more boards with information about 15 Steps Visits, the Listen to Me campaign<sup>6</sup>, and the labour ward, its values and performance. Since we were doing the tour virtually, we were unable to see the information that was on display beyond the large headings, we don’t know whether the information was reassuring or promoted choice. There was a display about the

<sup>5</sup> [www.kgh.nhs.uk/news/our-new-eden-team-helps-make-births-extra-special-807](http://www.kgh.nhs.uk/news/our-new-eden-team-helps-make-births-extra-special-807)

<sup>6</sup> [improvement.nhs.uk/resources/listen-to-me-helping-people-speak-up-in-maternity](http://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/listen-to-me-helping-people-speak-up-in-maternity)



different uniforms that staff may be wearing, there were a lot of different uniforms so this may have been too much to take in but could be useful to identify someone that you had already seen. There were no photographs of staff that might be working on the unit. The staff we saw were all in uniform and easy to identify. The staff appeared to be happy and relaxed.

We were shown to the toilets which did not appear to be signposted in a way that would be obvious to patients, as it said 'clients' rather than patients but they were close to the desk where staff were, were patients to ask. The toilets themselves looked very clean, there were no posters on the inside of the doors (on our last visit we had found the use of domestic violence posters inside the toilets), these may have been removed due to Covid-19.

As we walked through the unit, any doors that were open looked into clear empty treatment/ labour rooms or tidy looking office areas.

We were shown into the day room which had lots of information on mental health and a leaflet unit outside, the leaflets were all in English. Nicola talked us through the translation service and how it was usually pre-booked for appointments with people who needed it but it was possible to use when people arrived in labour as well. There were drinks facilities but Nicola explained that due to the current situation, the staff were making drinks for birth partners and birthing people and taking them into the room to avoid birth partners leaving the labour room and walking around the unit.

## Safe and clean

It was very clear who was staff on the unit - we saw only staff on the ward, likely due to the current situation with Covid-19, but they were in clear uniform.

The staff we saw during the visit were all wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) but Nicky explained that there was no requirement for someone to wear a mask if they were alone in an office or if they were going to be there for less than 15mins.

There was signage outside the labour rooms that showed what level of PPE staff would be wearing for each stage of labour. The door to each room had a sign to remind people to knock before entering to respect the patient's dignity.

We were shown into the isolation room reserved for any patients displaying symptoms of Covid-19 or for those who had tested positive. The room appeared to be very clean and although it contained a lot of equipment, it was still spacious and bright. The room had its own ensuite bathroom which looked very clean and tidy. There was some equipment in the room and it was explained that at the moment, the equipment was stored in there to avoid cross contamination.

We were shown through to the room where medication is stored in which swipe access was required to get in. We found the medicine room was kept very tidy and the drugs were stored away safely. They had a swipe card to enter the drugs room and a separate key to access cupboards and fridges. Everything was kept away secure and tidily in cupboards and trolleys. The area looked clean, tidy and organised.

## Caring and involving

We were unable to see staff interacting with any people using the ward or each other very much, due to Covid-19 and the limitations of the virtual tour. The staff interaction we did hear sounded like they were friendly and helpful to each other.

There were signs on the outside of the doors to the delivery rooms to remind staff to knock and wait for a response, this suggests that privacy and dignity is valued.

It was explained that the staff on the ward had quickly become used to wearing PPE and had settled into their new normal and still enjoyed being at work. From Nicola's caring attitude, the



information on the listen to me campaign and other family centred displays around the units, it felt that patient experience would be good here as they had good values as a team.

We asked Nicola if we could see her name badge and we found that the writing on the badge was considerably small and only legible if you are close to it. It would be great if different name badges were made so patients do not have to squint to be able to read who they are talking to; even just bigger writing would make a difference.

### Well organised and calm

Even though the staff were all wearing masks and we were watching through a screen (mobile device) we still felt that the staff were friendly and calm, especially during a pandemic. Before starting the video call, we were all prepared for everything to be a little more hectic because of Covid-19 however we were proven wrong, the environment was still calm which was reassuring. The area seemed very calm and relaxed, staff were in full PPE but those that we got close enough to seemed cheerful and there was no rushing around. Other than the PPE the atmosphere seemed no different to the last visit in March 2019, which although unexpected was very nice to see.

There didn't sound like there was much background noise or chatter on the ward from what we heard on the virtual tour. It didn't appear busy in the unit. Everything looked organised and there didn't appear to be any clutter.

## Rowan ward (Postnatal)

### Welcoming and informative

Outside the ward there was a fantastic display board with images and information relating to infant feeding.

There was an information board with staff photos on so that people could identify who they spoke with. We asked if staff badges could be seen in order to identify staff members whilst wearing PPE, it was explained that the placement of staff badges was such that they were able to be shown over the top of a plastic apron.

There was a display board about who the staff were and information on staff training of the ward including how many staff members should be on shift at that time and how many staff were on shift that day.

There was information on display about the Maternity Voices Partnership and posters about sharing their experience, including sharing their birth story with the staff and help to write their birth story.

The different areas were well signed and in a variety of languages. The logo used on all the signs gave an impression of a caring environment and helped to reduce the clinical feel of the area.

Lots of Covid-19 related signs were displayed and the information was clear and precise. Information regarding car parking and visiting restrictions was displayed in several areas and were easy to spot.

We saw a piece of wall art of a dandelion which gave the corridor a homely feel however it was felt that this wall art could continue around the rest of the walls on the ward rather than just in one spot.

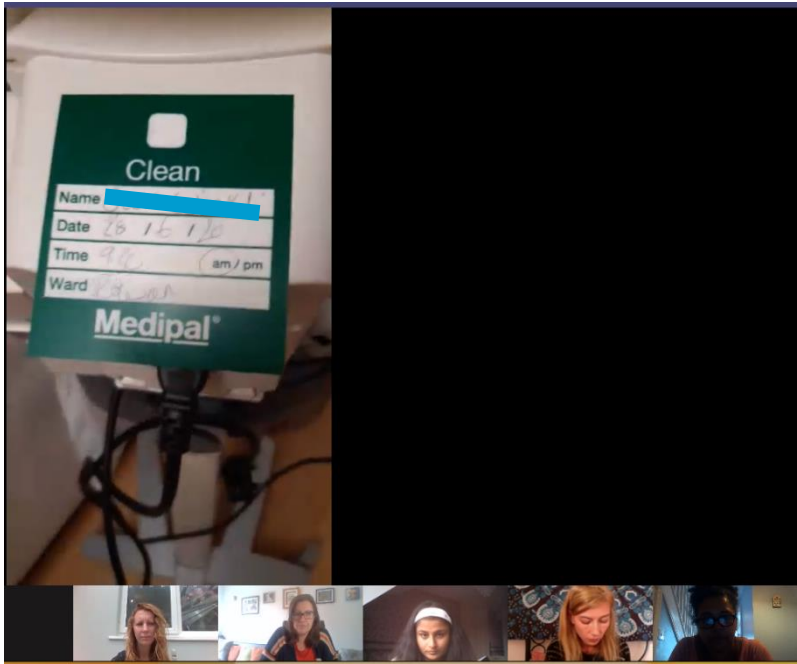
All around the ward there was clear yellow signage which was easy to see and follow across the hospital.



## Safe and clean

There was swipe and buzzer access to the ward and also to leave the ward again, to keep parents and babies safe.

The day room was still available for use throughout this period. Nicola explained that they were able to do this as all women were swabbed for Covid-19 on the way in and then grouped in bays based on their admission date. When all swabs were clear the women could then use the ward freely.



The equipment that was being stored ready for use had been cleaned and had green clean stickers on to show this, there was nothing similar on the bedding or tables in the bays on the ward. They looked very clean and tidy but there was nothing to reassure people that they had been sufficiently sanitised.

Visitor chairs in the bays were on the outside of each bay to make sure visitors were as far away from other bays as possible. There were also signs reminding them not to walk around the ward.

We were unsure about what to expect given the circumstances but felt very reassured to see everything looking very clean and tidy. Seeing staff in PPE made us feel safe and helped us feel more at ease with what to expect when cared for by staff wearing masks and other PPE. All staff that we saw were wearing masks correctly. The medicines were stored away appropriately in a room with swipe access with locked trolleys inside. The room looked tidy and well organised.

There was however a lack of visible “clean” stickers that are meant to be placed when equipment and beds have been cleaned, it would be great if this could be kept on top of so there is clear communication between staff and patients to ensure all equipment is able to be used safely.

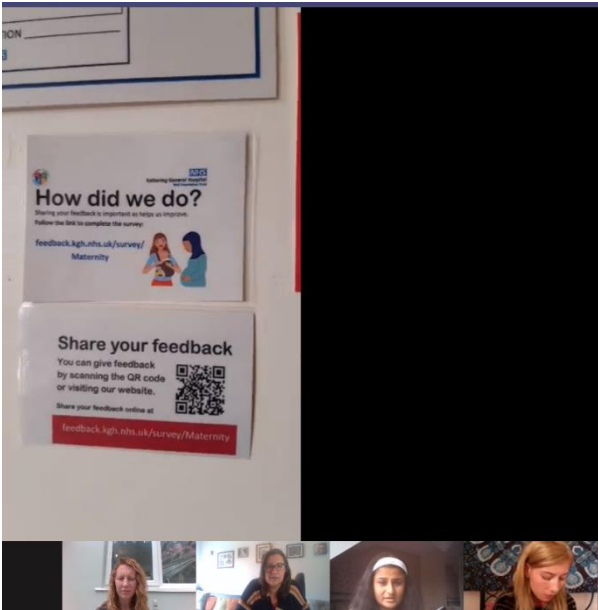
## Caring and involving

It appeared that staff are doing their best during Covid-19 to make the patient experience as positive as possible under the circumstances.

We saw little interaction due to the format of the tour. However, when Nicola asked permission to enter one of the bays which had a lady and her baby in, she introduced herself, informed the lady what we were doing and asked permission, she was very clear and polite.

We were shown the bays in Rowan ward (postnatal) where furniture has been moved around to accommodate birth partners for longer, which was very helpful.





The staff moved quietly around the ward, there were staff visible to make you feel reassured and able to seek support, but not too many that it was busy or crowded.

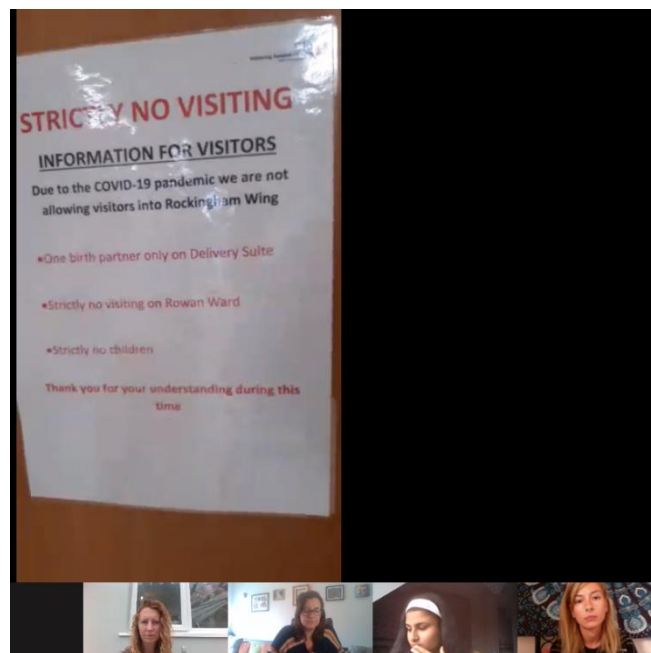
The information on display about baby care and breastfeeding is reassuring and empowering for new parents. There were feedback posters following the theme of “you said, we did” showing patients and visitors what changes have been made based of feedback they have been given. This shows the ward is listening to any concerns and acting upon them. There was also a QR code that patients could scan to access a website to give feedback; a quick and easy way to be able to share concerns or positives.

## Well organised and Calm

The area seemed very calm and quiet; it felt very similar to a previous visit, despite being in the middle of a pandemic. There were not too many people around and nobody was rushing about. We could not hear any chatter or anything on the ward that would disturb anyone. The information boards are set out in a visually appealing way so add some décor as well as the nice stickers on the wall which make it a bit more homely.

Some of the signage around Covid-19 could be made less frightening - perhaps yellow highlights instead of black and red.

There was no clutter around the unit, lots of clear space to walk around without feeling in the way or coming close to others. It looked tidy and clean throughout the ward. Any places that we could see into from the corridor looked to be tidy as well.





# Northampton General Hospital

The same group of volunteers had another Microsoft Teams call later the same day with Lorraine the Matron for Inpatient Services at Northampton General Hospital. We began the call in an office and then were taken to Sturridge (labour) and Robert Watson (postnatal) wards to complete the 15 Steps Visit in the same areas for each trust. The tour was conducted on a laptop.

## Sturridge Labour ward

### Welcoming and informative

We were shown into Sturridge Ward; the area was well-signed with overhead signs. After going through the doors, we entered a reception area containing a small waiting area that is not in use at the moment but appeared clear and tidy with a TV in the corner playing short videos about baby care, sleep and breastfeeding. There is a welcome board with information on the meet the matron service, the complaints procedure, safeguarding, the Baby Friendly Initiative<sup>7</sup> and pregnancy information. There was a small waiting area with leaflets on display within the unit, this was currently out of use but Lorraine explained that this was for those waiting in early labour or waiting before a caesarean.

We didn't see any posters informing people of the restrictions on birth partners and visiting but assumed this would be communicated verbally. We were told after the visit that posters in place on the front doors to Sturridge from reception and also one on the entrance from the corridor.

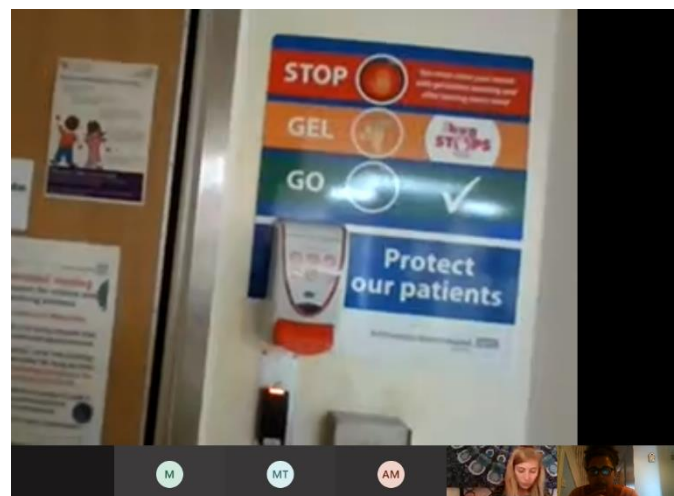
There was a clear reception window to speak with staff. Staff seen behind the desk had PPE on. There was no information on the uniforms staff may be wearing or pictures of staff who may be on the ward but when asked if this was available we were told that everyone was in various scrubs and PPE at the moment anyway so it would be impossible to tell who was who. We were told afterwards that information relating to staff working that day is available on the patient safety board but we did not see it during the visit.

The labour room that we saw was very bare and contained just a bed, chair and table with some equipment.

### Safe and clean

The doors into and through the ward felt secure with the swipe access. There was hand sanitiser available and there was a separate table with gloves, masks and hand sanitiser on it. We asked who this was for and was told it was for staff and visitors but we didn't feel that was clear without explanation or clear signage.

There was a reception desk and doors to the labour ward which were controlled by swipe access. We did not see any visible signs regarding Covid-19, which surprised us, and there was not a lot of information around



<sup>7</sup>[www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/)

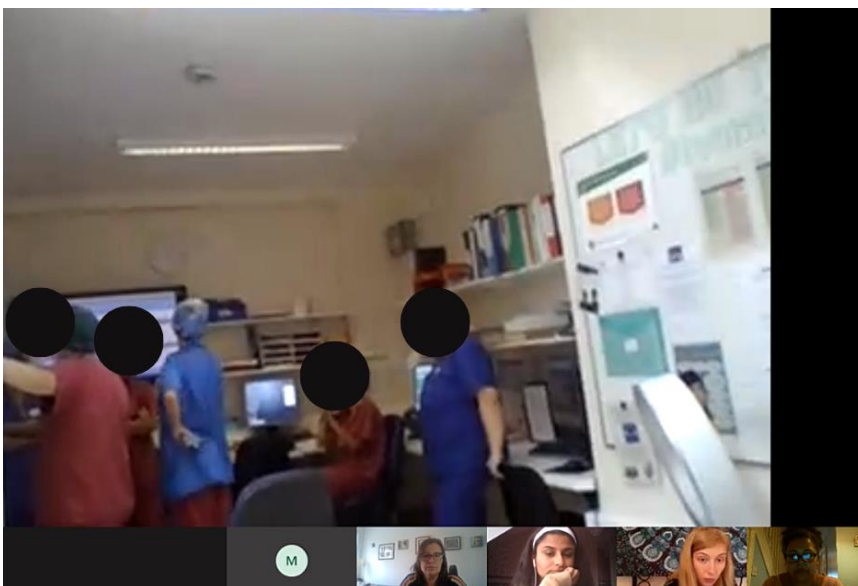


the ward about what was in place because of Covid-19, so it didn't appear like anything was different. We were told afterwards that there are social distancing markers on the floor within reception and within the labour rooms.

We were told that patients and visitors are not screened (either asked about symptoms or have their temperature taken) before they enter the ward area. It was explained to us that upon arrival, patients are allocated to a room before being tested for Covid-19. If a patient tests positive, they are moved to the pool room which has been allocated for use by Covid-19 positive patients. We were all slightly concerned that patients/visitors were not screened before entering the ward although we appreciated that this may be because the hospital can obtain Covid-19 test results very quickly due to rapid testing<sup>8</sup>. There was no process for screening of women entering via temperature checks, it was explained that due to them being taken to an assessment room straight away and access to fast track results from Covid-19 swabs, there was no need for this as they were not joining others on a bay.

In the response from Northampton General Hospital we were told that "Women are asked Covid related questions when they ring Triage, about them and any people in their household. The women are taken straight into an assessment room where a set of observations and history is taken. Women who phone triage and have answered yes to the Covid questions are met in the carpark by a midwife who checks their temperature and gives them a mask and transfers them directly into one of the Covid rooms for assessment. All women and visitors are advised to wear a mask and gel their hand before entering any ward area. We are swabbing partner and women for all elective pathways prior to their admission.

COVID testing for women and their partner has meant that screening (temperature) before entering the clinical area on our Labour Ward is not necessary as a single room is provided until the mothers COVID status is known. We have been fortunate in having the results back within 2-4 hours."



Staff walked around the ward with PPE on mostly, although at one point a woman in maroon scrubs walked past the camera without a mask on. We expected to see all staff on the labour ward with masks on for reassurance of those using the unit. Similarly, there was a large group of staff in a small space (that had the patient information board in it). Whilst the staff may not be expected to be social distancing at work due to the nature of it, it may be

difficult for patients to see so many people crowded together when there are so many restrictions in place for birth partners and visitors.

In their response, Northampton General Hospital told us "We encourage social distancing at all times, however there are times where this isn't possible due to the nature of the work

<sup>8</sup> [www.northamptongeneral.nhs.uk/News/Articles/AllNews/Rapid-coronavirus-testing-underway-at-Northampton-General.aspx](http://www.northamptongeneral.nhs.uk/News/Articles/AllNews/Rapid-coronavirus-testing-underway-at-Northampton-General.aspx)



undertaken. The picture displays an MDT [Multi-Disciplinary Team] discussion around a serious topic which required multiple clinicians to review a screen. We will continue to remind staff to keep distanced where possible. We do take the wearing of PPE seriously, we have signage for staff in situ around the ward and at the entrance to wards, our Infection Prevention teams are visible and supports and trains staff as required, if at any time a staff member is seen not to be adhering to our policy then we encourage staff to challenge their peers to ensure that our high standards are maintained at all times.”

We were told that there were two rooms that were used for Covid-19 suspected or confirmed patients, the pool room with an attached toilet and another room with an ensuite wet room. It was reassuring to hear that people would not be sharing facilities. However, when asked if this meant that the pool room was out of use for non Covid-19 users, Lorraine said that if it was free they could use it.

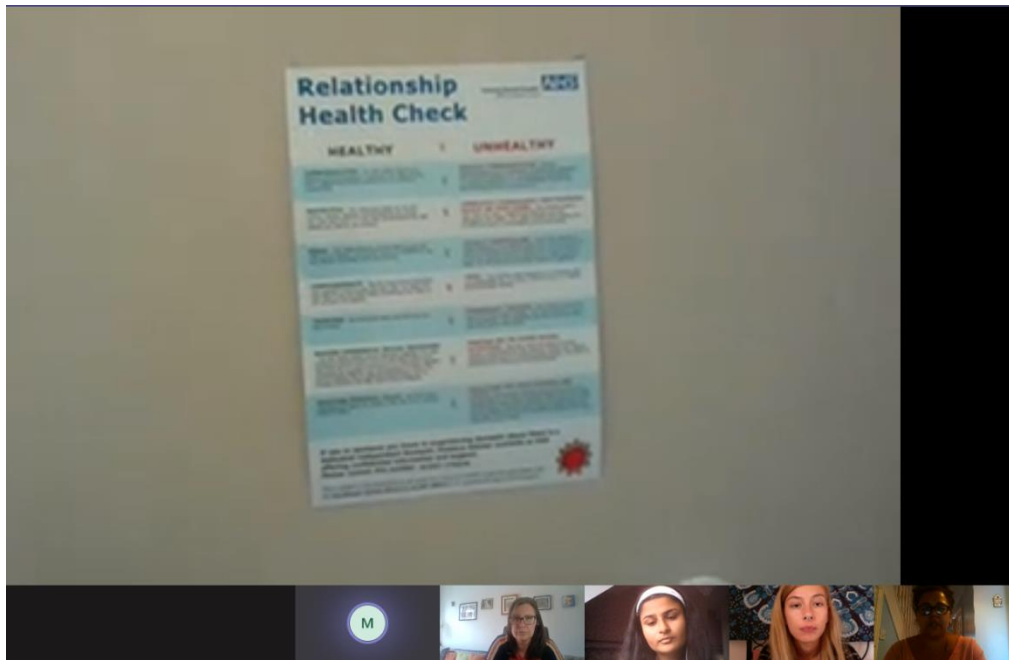
We were shown into a labour room which was bright, clean and tidy with a clean and spacious wet room attached. There were some stickers on the equipment in the room to show it had been cleaned but nothing on the bed or table. There was a lack of “clean” stickers which are placed to show a piece of equipment has been cleaned and is ready for use. The ward should be filled with these stickers however we found that there were bits of equipment which did not have this indication.

It was explained that there was a toilet that had been made into a makeshift visitor toilet on the ward due to Covid-19, presumably to ensure birth partners are not sharing toilets with labouring women or visitors to the hospital in other areas. The toilet appeared clean and had a call bell to call for staff assistance.

### Caring and involving

As we entered there was a board with information about the staff working; a “meet the matron” board. This was a nice friendly touch so the patients are aware and can familiarise themselves. There was information on display about patient safety and the percentages of things that had been dealt with in a timely manner such as post-partum haemorrhage. These statistics may be reassuring if these are some of your worries when using the unit. There is information on display about domestic abuse awareness, Healthy and Unhealthy behaviours in a relationship. There were information leaflets in different languages for women who do not speak English as their first language. This helps all women feel a sense of familiarity when they come into the ward during a stressful time.

The rooms were very plain and not too appealing to look at, staff agreed and said ‘it is what it is’. We have no doubt that the staff working on the ward have little control over this and that they care mostly about the women they are caring for. However, at last year’s 15 Steps Visit to the ward it was brought up that the labour rooms were very hospital room looking (clinical) and not the most comforting and homely environment to be giving birth in. There appears to have been no changes implemented here, however Lorraine said there were plans to have some stencilled art done on the wall.



### Well organised and calm

We were taken past the staff area; nearly all the staff were wearing scrubs, making it impossible to identify them. There were no posters describing staff uniforms and we did not see any information displayed showing the names of staff working on the ward that day, although we were told afterwards that it is available on the patient safety board. The staff seemed very busy and the atmosphere was a little tense. The general atmosphere on the ward was busy and quite noisy, there was definite background noise of chatter and people passing in the corridors more, it appeared busy to us on the tour. With so many staff visible on the ward it was very crowded and didn't feel particularly spacious.

The corridors looked cluttered with equipment in the hallways. Inside offices and where the medicines were stored looked quite untidy and cluttered. Lorraine explained that some of the equipment stored was from the surgical area due to lack of space.

We were told about the plans to redesign the ward in future creating more labour rooms with ensembles and hopefully another pool and a triage area.

The staff area with the patient information board was visible to people in the ward but the actual board itself was on a wall behind a pillar so was well placed to prevent passers-by seeing any confidential information.

The labour and assessment rooms we saw were clear, tidy and bright with plenty of room to move around so within the rooms it appeared to be nice and calm.

The birthing rooms were very tidy and had a particularly good storage spot for the birthing ball out of the way, ensuring no one can trip over them.

## Robert Watson Ward (Postnatal)

### Welcoming and informative

There were information leaflets on the unit, we were unable to see what these were about but when asked, Lorraine told us that they were in English. There was a poster at the reception



window that told users who to contact to discuss any aspects of their care, this had various different languages displayed on it.

There were whiteboards in each area that had written on them the staff that were working in that area that day but not all of these had been written on.

On the ward there was information about Maternity Voices Partnership and a way to provide feedback to the hospital, displayed with a comment box and postcards to write down your thoughts.

### Safe and clean

We were shown into a private room on the ward that was empty it looked very clean, tidy and spacious and was wheelchair accessible. It had a large and clean ensuite attached. There were no clean stickers on items to let people know they had been recently cleaned and there was no hand sanitiser in the room but Lorraine said that there usually was. There were hand sanitiser dispensers on the walls in the corridor areas.

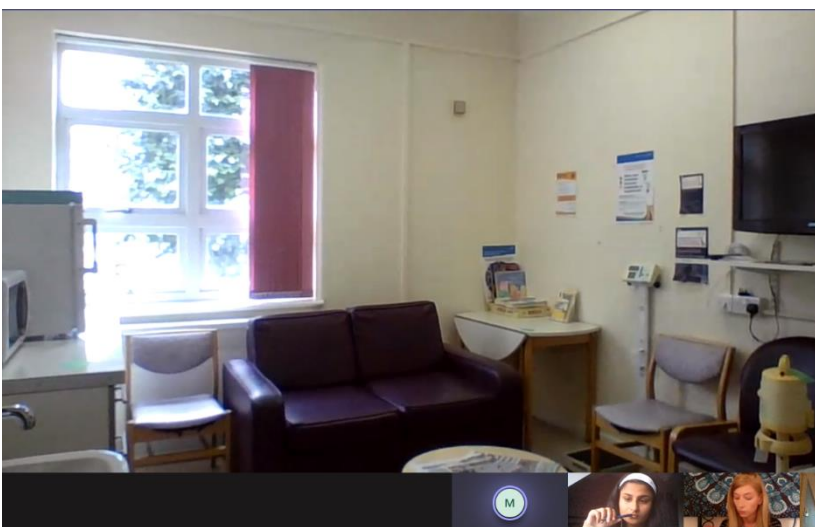
The staff that we saw were all wearing PPE. Although it was not easy to see who did what job, staff were clearly visible to anyone who may need to speak with them.

We were taken into the area where the medicines were kept which was secured so that nobody could access them. This room was very full and cluttered like the other rooms we saw but things appeared organised.

### Caring and involving

We didn't see any interaction between staff or between staff and patients on the ward but when asked how she thought staff were feeling at the moment Lorraine explained that she thought the staff had got used to wearing the PPE that was required because of Covid-19. She said that it was very difficult wearing masks in hot weather, and that she hadn't heard any complaints and that no staff members had said they felt vulnerable or at risk. As we walked past members of staff in the ward, they all greeted Lorraine with a friendly attitude and came across calm and collected, especially during a pandemic.

There were no posters around about privacy, dignity and knocking and waiting before entering a room. We were told afterwards that these were removed by the IPC [Infection Prevention Control] team during the pandemic and will be replaced when safe to do so.

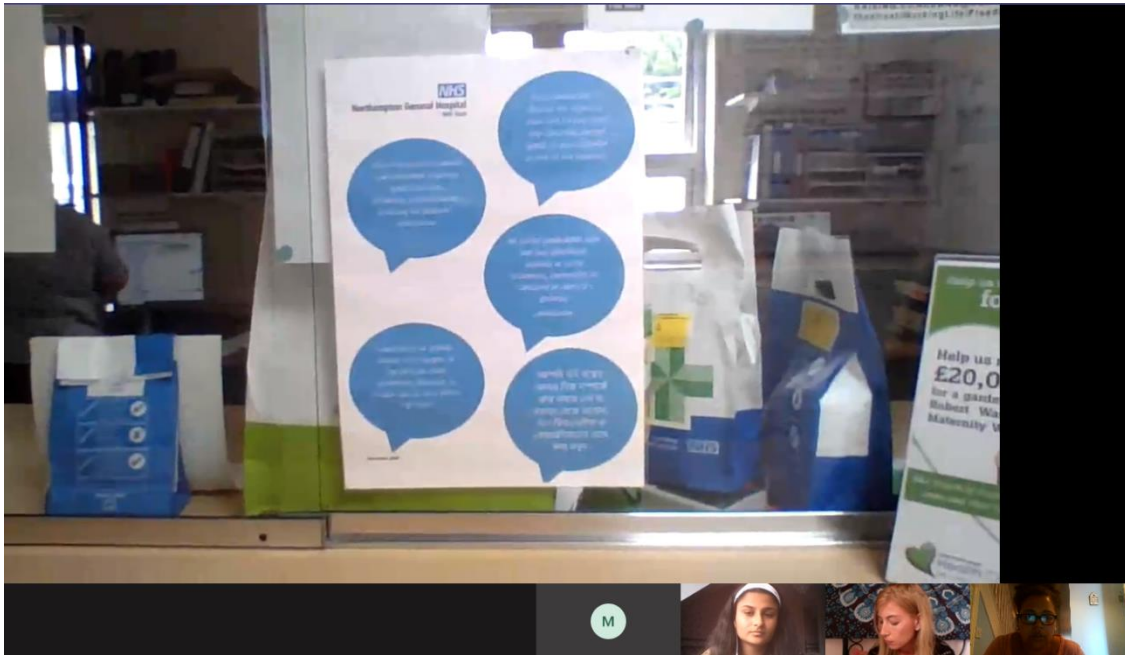


There were facilities in the family room for making drinks and storing breast milk alongside a sofa and TV. It looked cluttered and like there was more furniture in there than was necessary, although the room is not currently in use due to Covid-19 restrictions.

### Well organised and calm



There was a bit of clutter around the unit, you could see into areas that didn't look very tidy. This appeared to be due to lack of space as there were very few surfaces that didn't have things stored on them.



There was also a window at the reception area that had pharmacy bags stacked up messily around the window, yellow stickers were visible against the window facing out, we were unable to see these in detail via the camera but in person it would be easy to read the patients details through the glass.

We were shown into a transitional care area briefly which was bright, clean and tidy. We didn't see any of the bay areas, perhaps they were all in use.

There was some background noise heard such as chatter but this ward felt quieter and calmer than the labour ward.



## Conclusion

In conclusion both hospitals appear to be coping with the new way of working.

The faster testing at Northampton General Hospital meant that patients' experiences were not too disturbed by Covid-19 and in Kettering General Hospital allowances had been made to accommodate for the new changes needed to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on patients.

At both hospitals it was concerning that there was a lack of 'clean' stickers on equipment that appeared to be ready to use.

### What worked well Kettering General Hospital

- Clear signage and expectations about Covid-19
- Posters about privacy and dignity before entering each room
- All areas appeared to be clear of clutter
- Staff appear to be happy in work

### Recommendations Kettering General Hospital

- 'Clean' stickers to be used in all areas that have been cleaned
- Display more information about healthy relationships
- The implementation of clearer name badges with larger writing

### What worked well Northampton General Hospital

- Fast turnaround testing for Covid-19
- Good information available about healthy relationships
- Areas seen appear 'normal' to patients

### Recommendations

- 'Clean' stickers to be used in areas that have been cleaned
- Clear and tidy as many of the areas as possible to reduce clutter
- Staff to stick to social distancing in line with government guidelines where possible
- Reminders about privacy and dignity could be added to the outside of doors on both wards





## Response from Kettering General Hospital

We are very passionate about the services we provide to women and their families and are truly committed to responding to the feedback of our services users to influence care delivery. Healthwatch is an important part of that feedback and we always welcome their reports to help us review our facilities through the eyes of those that access our services. This 15 Steps review took place at an unprecedented time for the NHS, in the midst of a global pandemic, and it is really reassuring to hear that reviewers and women see a service that is calm, friendly and safe.

Since this recent visit we have taken the following steps;

- ensured that posters detailing how to access confidential support in difficult circumstances is available on the back of toilet doors for our women in our ward areas
- spoken with our Estates team about improved signage for toilet facilities which is in progress
- confirmed with our recruitment colleagues that ID badges are now being printed with much larger font

## Response from Northampton General Hospital

We are very grateful to Healthwatch and their volunteers for undertaking a virtual 15 Steps, this has been a very useful exercise and we are grateful for the feedback which we have noted and will act upon as appropriate. We appreciate your acknowledgement of the positive and comfortable environment we have worked hard to create for ladies, babies and partners. This has been of the utmost importance to us during this time and we are glad you were able to see this.

The last few months, being in a COVID pandemic have been very testing and has stretched us and we have learnt much together we feel very proud of how our staff have adapted and tried to make the women's journey through our service as safe and as positive as possible. We have, with Kettering, and the support of the MVP held regular zoom calls to keep women and families updated with the many changes that have happened due to COVID-19.

As the visit was conducted virtually, there were likely to be areas which were not visible through the visit and we will provide assurance of where we have implemented processes that may not have been immediately identifiable during the tour. For example, posters were not seen in regards to the restriction of visiting; however we do have posters available on the front doors to Sturtridge from reception and also one on the entrance from the corridor. We have ensured that these have been in place since visiting was restricted by the Trust.

In terms of visible signs regarding Covid-19 and the screening of patients and visitors, there are social distancing markers on the floor within reception and within the labour rooms. Women are asked Covid related questions when they ring Triage, about them and any people in their household. The women are taken straight into an assessment room where a set of observations and history is taken. Women who phone triage and have answered yes to the Covid questions are met in the carpark by a midwife who checks their temperature and gives them a mask and transfers them directly into one of the Covid rooms for assessment. All women and visitors are advised to wear a mask and gel their hand before entering any ward area. We are swabbing partner and women for all elective pathways prior to their admission.



COVID testing for women and their partner has meant that screening (temperature) before entering the clinical area on our Labour Ward is not necessary as a single room is provided until the mothers COVID status is known. We have been fortunate in having the results back within 2-4 hours.

Women do not go to any other ward area until their results are known. We hope that this provides some assurance in terms of our process and guidelines which were not immediately obvious during the visit.

In regards to the photo of a number of members of staff that were not social distancing. We encourage social distancing at all times, however there are times where this isn't possible due to the nature of the work undertaken. The picture displays an MDT [Multi-Disciplinary Team] discussion around a serious topic which required multiple clinicians to review a screen. We will continue to remind staff to keep distanced where possible. We do take the wearing of PPE seriously, we have signage for staff in situ around the ward and at the entrance to wards, our Infection Prevention teams are visible and supports and trains staff as required, if at any time a staff member is seen not to be adhering to our policy then we encourage staff to challenge their peers to ensure that our high standards are maintained at all times.

Information relating to staff working that day is available on the patient safety board, apologies that you did not see this during your visit. In addition to this, privacy and dignity notices were removed by the IPC [Infection Prevention Control] team during the pandemic and will be replaced when safe to do so.

We have also been looking really closely at how we can improve our environment, we have submitted a business case to upgrade the Labour Ward but completing priorities at the current time have prevented us moving at the pace we had desired.

The family room is not currently in use due to Covid restrictions, however once we are able to, we will ensure the excess furniture within the room is removed and it is again a welcoming place to be.

We will also remind staff to ensure 'clean' stickers are placed onto equipment which have been cleaned.

Throughout this time the Professional Midwifery Advocates and senior Midwifery team have been supporting women, families and staff with the many changes and stress this may have caused,

Thank you again for this opportunity. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the service.

## Thanks and Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to all those who took the time to make this virtual visit possible, including:

- Northampton General Hospital
- Kettering General Hospital
- Northamptonshire's Maternity Voice Partnership
- Volunteers from Maternity Voice Partnership and Healthwatch Northamptonshire



## About Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Healthwatch 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 wellbeing 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, 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 lots of different ways of finding out 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 Northamptonshire and the people who 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](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

**healthwatch**  
Northamptonshire





# About Northamptonshire Maternity Voices

## Partnership

### Northamptonshire Maternity Voices Partnership

#### Help shape how your maternity service looks

- Making a difference to local maternity services.
- Membership includes mums, dads, parents-to-be, grandparents, midwives, health visitors, infant feeding specialists, perinatal mental health experts and members of local community groups who provide services to expectant mums, new parents and their babies.
- A way to provide feedback and express your views on the maternity care received during pregnancy, throughout the birth and postnatal care.
- Part of the Local Maternity and Neonates System (LMNS) transformation programme.
- A critical friend to the NHS maternity team.
- Meetings are held four times a year in a relaxed atmosphere to encourage everyone to discuss their experiences. Whether you attend once or come to every meeting, these opportunities for discussion are invaluable in helping us develop your local maternity services.

#### How do I join?

If you are interested in being involved, please get in touch via our Facebook Group or on Twitter:

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/groups/Northantsmvp](https://www.facebook.com/groups/Northantsmvp)

Twitter: [@northants\\_mvp](https://twitter.com/northants_mvp)



Working in partnership to improve maternity services





## About Connected Together

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch 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](http://www.connectedtogether.co.uk)



**Connected Together**  
First for Community Engagement





## Contact us

Address: Healthwatch Northamptonshire  
Moulton Park Business Centre  
Redhouse Road  
Northampton  
NN3 6AQ

Phone: 0300 002 0010

Text: 07951 419331

Email: [enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

Website: [www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

Facebook: [Healthwatchnorthamptonshire](https://www.facebook.com/Healthwatchnorthamptonshire)

Twitter: [@HWatchNorthants](https://twitter.com/HWatchNorthants)



We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you require this report in an alternative format please contact us at the address above.

© Copyright Healthwatch Northamptonshire 2020

Part of Connected Together Community Interest Company Registered in England and Wales.  
Company No. 8496240

Email: [hello@connectedtogether.co.uk](mailto:hello@connectedtogether.co.uk)

Facebook: [ConnectedtogetherCIC](https://www.facebook.com/ConnectedtogetherCIC)

Twitter: [@ConnectedCIC](https://twitter.com/ConnectedCIC)

Website: [www.connectedtogether.co.uk](http://www.connectedtogether.co.uk)



**Connected Together**  
First for Community Engagement