



LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND

Maternity Voices

Working in partnership to improve maternity & neonatal services

15 STEPS FOR MATERNITY

Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland

September 2024



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Contents

Introduction.....	2
-------------------	---

What is the 15 Steps for Maternity?

What did the MNVP do to undertake the 15 Steps?.....	3
--	---

Who was present?

How did we conduct the 15 Steps?

Leicester General Hospital.....	4
---------------------------------	---

Findings and Recommendations

Leicester Royal Infirmary.....	9
--------------------------------	---

Findings and Recommendations

Next Steps.....	11
-----------------	----

Thank you.....	12
----------------	----

Special Thanks

How to get in touch



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Maternity Voices

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Introduction

The Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Maternity & Neonatal Voices Partnership (LLR MNVP) is a team of women/families, commissioners, healthcare professionals & community organisations working together to review and contribute to the development of local maternity and neonatal care.

The MNVP works to ensure every woman and birthing person on the maternity pathway has a chance to have their voice heard about the service they receive.

What is the 15 Steps for Maternity?

“I can tell what kind of care my daughter is going to get within 15 steps of walking onto a ward”, said a mum whose daughter was regularly admitted to hospital due to an ongoing health condition.

The 15 Steps toolkit was developed and published by NHS England. The idea of the 15 Steps Challenge is to allow participants to explore maternity services through the eyes of those who use them (service users).

Using an observational approach, participants are encouraged to assess areas based on four key themes. These are;

- Welcoming and Informative
- Safe and Clean
- Friendly and Personal
- Organised and Calm

What did the MNVP do to undertake the 15 Steps?

Together with the UHL Safety Champions, MNVP agreed a time and date to conduct the 15 Steps at Leicester General Hospital and Leicester Royal Infirmary Antenatal and Postnatal Wards.

Who was present?

Through various channels, the MNVP recruited service users to participate on the 15 Steps Challenge. Participants included service users and service user representatives, including a representative from Trade Sexual Health as well as the MNVP Leads, UHL Safety Champion/Midwife and a UHL Consultant Midwife. Trade Sexual Health representation was key to providing input to ensure the LGBTQ+ community voice was represented.

2 Maternity Units	2 UHL Staff Members	2 MNVP Leads
11 Participants	10 Service Users Signed up	7 Service Users Participated



How did we conduct the 15 Steps?

The MNVP Team held a meeting with participants online to explain what the 15 Steps are.

When conducting the 15 Steps we spent around 20 minutes in each area. As we walked around some of the feedback and suggestions from participants were immediately fed back to the maternity staff.



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Findings and Recommendations

Leicester General Hospital 15 Steps



Welcoming and Informative

- Upon entering the maternity unit, it was not clear where to go for the postnatal ward. It was only due to knowing from their own previous experiences that it was felt service users knew which ward to go to.
- The entrance to Ward 30 was considered very bland and boring, with a noticeable lack of warmth. There is no sign to the reception in the ward once let in. Visitors enter into a large corridor which they need to follow to get to the staff desk area where they will then be directed by staff. It was also said to be very bright, and this was without all the lights on. Some individuals may find this overwhelming.
- The Dayroom was found to be inconspicuous, with service users stating they were not aware of it being there even though they had stayed on the ward and would have gone right past it. Staff reassured that they do signpost parents to the room when they enter but it was felt it may not be clear and that this needed to be highlighted as a space for parents to use.
- The Dayroom space was complimented as being a pleasant space to be able to make some tea/coffee. The use of colour in the room was welcomed and was seen as a nice touch. Whilst some felt the walls were too dark, others felt it was better than the bland walls often seen in hospital.
- It was mentioned clearer signposting to Breastfeeding Peer Support groups and Leicester Mamas would be helpful as service users reflected on their struggle to initiate breastfeeding and knowing on the postnatal ward that there was local community support available for them for when parents have gone home would have been great. Although



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there was a poster signposting to Breastfeeding Peer Support it was not positioned in a prominent location, with handwritten and barely legible information on there.

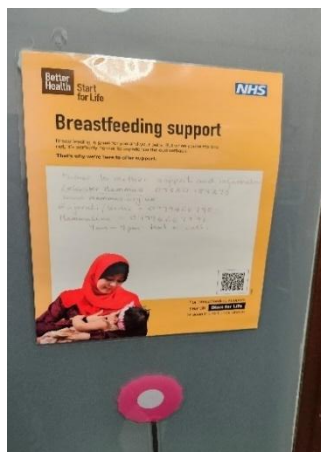
- Highlighting the National Breastfeeding Helpline and Leicester Mamas breastfeeding helpline number was also requested. Overall, it was felt the importance of breastfeeding should be prioritised on the ward, with ample support available.
- The role of partners/fathers and how they can provide support was mentioned as an area that needs improvement. Sharing key information on the ward so they can support women postnatally regardless of feeding method, including skin to skin for partners and general care of women and baby also. Partners now being able to stay overnight was celebrated as a real achievement by all.
- An information pack was discussed that could be provided to everyone admitted on the ward with information on what services are available on the ward, visiting times, community support groups, breastfeeding support – latching baby, safer sleeping, expressing breastmilk etc. This could be a QR code that links to important information. Discharge information is an area staff have said is already being looked into so taking these points into consideration would be great.
- When leaving the maternity unit, there is a large poster about breastfeeding and Health for Under 5s contact details which was positive. It was felt this would also be of benefit on the ward.
- Mental health support was not clearly visible on the ward and we did not see a poster on the Birth Reflections service. No information was seen of the MNVP even though posters had been provided previously.
- There was a board on 'Who's who: uniforms' which some felt was an overload of information and that the space could be used for more relevant information for parents. Others thought this may be good to have somewhere on the ward. One service user said 'I just want to know that I'm being cared for when I'm on the ward. I don't need to know the titles or look at the stripes and think you are not qualified enough to look after me.'

Recommendations

1. Direction to the postnatal ward needs to be clearer. The entrance needs a transformation. Consider painting, décor. Adding a themed wall would be great.
2. Redecorating to make the corridor more relaxing and to add more warmth. Consider lighting and how this may affect those with additional needs.
3. Sign indicating reception area.
4. Clear, visible posters of local Breastfeeding Peer Support groups in the local community.
5. Partner/Father information in Dayroom.
6. Breastfeeding support posters to be included and clearly visible on the ward.
7. Purpose of Dayroom needs to be clear – consider renaming to 'Parents room'. Display appropriate information in the room, particularly on services available.

8. Posters to provide parents with information on mental health support and Birth Reflections - what to look out for and where to access support.

9. MNVP information should be displayed on the ward also.



Safe and Clean

- General level of cleanliness upon entering the ward was positive.
- The sanitiser handpump when you enter the ward was empty. We were reassured this would be refilled immediately. Handwash was available further down the corridor.
- Staff explained that Dayroom is closed at meal times as it doubles as the kitchen space where hot meals are prepared for parents staying on the ward. There is a notice to indicate when this will be.
- Support for those who may be experiencing domestic abuse needs further consideration. Service users were not aware of the domestic abuse helpline number in the toilets until it was mentioned.
- Bin was used as a doorstopper where there is already limited space to store or prepare milk (Please see image below).
- One service user mentioned the toilets did not appear clean and was concerned there was urine on the floor.

Recommendations

1. The display board about hand sanitising would be better placed in the beginning, when first entering the ward, rather than further down the hallway.
2. To ensure women have a safe space to disclose domestic abuse if needed, it was suggested that either the discharge meeting before leaving the ward or the Health Visitor appointment at home, could be held without the partner present.
3. Ensure there are enough doorstops available on the wards so that doors do not need to be propped open with bins.



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4. Regular checks by cleaning staff to ensure toilets are kept clean for parents.



Friendly and Personal

- The Dayroom was not seen as a family-friendly space, with nothing for children to do when visiting.
- It was positive to see the Bereavement Room was well thought-out. In particular, it was good to note the room is away from the ward rooms, with its own separate kitchen and bathroom area and has a homely feel.
- Photos in some areas of the ward were not reflective of the multicultural community of LLR. The only posters showing diversity were grouped together in one area.
- The staff conducting the 15 Steps with us were very welcoming and open, however no other staff on the ward acknowledged us. It is important that staff seem approachable for parents.

Recommendations

1. Reading materials for children, toys and colouring would make the space feel more appropriate and child-friendly.
2. Bereavement room could do with modernising as had quite a dated feel, as did much of the ward.
3. Display boards throughout the ward should be reflective of our communities.
4. Staff conduct can affect whether someone asks for support when they need it. Coming across as interested and approachable is very important, especially as it can be a very vulnerable time after birth and often quite overwhelming.

Organised and Calm

- The date on the whiteboard on the ward at the reception/staff area was incorrect and was not amended whilst we were there.



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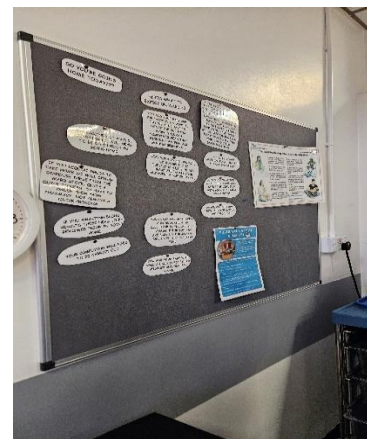
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- Whilst it was positive to see many displays with information, it was felt the displays could do with updating. In particular, in the Dayroom there was a lack of information and the information that was present was not eye-catching or very useful. Some posters on the ward had very small writing or were not placed well. Some had too much writing that would not be read.
- The side room we entered had a lovely flower background on one side. The room felt like a calm space to be in after birth.
- Unfortunately, the space in the bays is very limited and cramped. There does not seem to be any other alternative as the issue is the lack of space. It was mentioned by service users that it is not ideal, nor a very calm atmosphere to be in when you have just had a baby and you are then confined to very limited space with several other new parents and babies. It can feel extremely overwhelming at times. It was acknowledged by all that this may not be possible to change for the present.

Recommendations

1. It is helpful for service users if the date on the whiteboard is correct.
2. Dayroom displays need reorganising with parent information, in particular support for breastfeeding, mental health services, St Marys Birth Centre etc. Pamphlets/leaflets for parents to take away so they have a point of reference would be useful.
3. Displays around the ward can be enhanced by adding colour, making them brighter. Enlarge the writing so the words can be read easily and keeping the information to the point is also important.
4. Handwashing area could do with neatening up in the corridor as posters were lopsided on the wall.





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Leicester Royal Infirmary 15 Steps



Welcoming and Informative

- We visited both Ward 5 and Ward 6 during the 15 Steps. The Welcome signs with different languages were lovely and felt very inclusive of the local community.
- The two wards had different names for the Parents room which was said to be confusing, with Ward 5 calling the Parents Room, the Dayroom.
- Ward 5 had some toys in the Dayroom for children who visit. This was seen as a nice touch and would make siblings feel more welcome. There was a shelf behind the door with leaflets, however this was felt to be in the wrong place.
- No MNVP information was seen anywhere on the wards. Posters had been provided previously but were not displayed. It was also felt more information is needed on Ward 6 about accessing support for breastfeeding, Perinatal Mental Health, the Birth Reflections service, St Marys Birth Centre etc.

Recommendations

1. To avoid any confusion of the purpose of the rooms, please name both rooms on the wards as 'Parents Room'.
2. The toys in the Dayroom in Ward 5 could do with a refresh and be organised properly.
3. Place leaflets for parents in a more accessible place, where parents are more likely to see them.
4. Display MNVP Banner/poster on the wards to inform service users of the MNVP.
5. More information needs to be displayed around support available. Accessibility and additional needs should be considered, for example, language.

Safe and Clean

- Overall, the wards felt safe and clean.



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Friendly and Personal

- It was felt there was a stark difference between the two Wards. Ward 5 was said to have felt more 'clinical', less friendly and with less colour. Walls were described as empty and bland. Ward 6 had a better atmosphere, being described as 'calmer', 'fresher' and 'a more friendly' environment.
- Ward 5 'Dayroom' also had mismatched chairs which made the room look incomplete. However, Ward 6 Parents Room, although smaller in size, felt more inviting, with comfy seating.

Recommendations

1. Ward 5 needs some attention to make it feel more comfortable, with some paint, artwork etc to help create a less clinical environment.
2. The furniture could do with updating in the Ward 5 Parents Room, with a nice sofa/comfortable seating instead of mismatched chairs, to make it more comfortable. The room needs some structure and the furniture can possibly be rearranged to create a more welcoming space.

Organised and Calm

- On Ward 5 the staff-focused and patient-focused displays were mixed together rather than having a designated parent information area. It was felt this needed separating to make it clear what was relevant to whom. Also, the Janam App poster was stuck on a wall where it would be unlikely to be noticed. It was felt this needed moving in order to be seen. There was also a sign saying 'Breastfeeding Room' but the room is currently used as a staff quiet room.
- Upon entering Ward 6 there is 'A message to matron' box but no clear sign of what this means or instructions on what to do. It was felt this would be overlooked by many.

Recommendations

1. Create a designated and clear parent information area, separating staff and patient information.
2. Move Janam App poster to the Parents Room.
3. Clear signage of the room purpose is important. Remove the breastfeeding sign and instead add what the room is being utilised for instead.
4. Add an eye-catching poster or title to invite parents to write a message and post in the box. Adding a small table with a pen would be ideal to be able to write the message.

Next Steps

We will present this report to the UHL Maternity team and look to create an action plan to monitor the progress of recommendations made within this report.

We look forward to receiving an update from UHL Staff on the improvements made based on our findings and suggestions. It was particularly positive to see some of the feedback taken on board from the previous 15 steps earlier this year. This highlighted how truly important the 15 Steps Visits are.

The MNVP will continue to conduct the 15 Steps to ensure we review the changes made and document any improvements.

We acknowledge the need to continue the 15 Steps Challenge to ensure service user perspective is at the heart of local maternity and neonatal services.



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Special Thanks

Thank you to everyone that supported this project and worked to make it possible, with special thanks to the UHL Safety Champions and Consultant Midwife who conducted the 15 Steps alongside us.

And a massive thank you to the service users/service user representatives and Trade Sexual Health representative who participated in the 15 Steps. Your contributions to improving local maternity and neonatal services are truly invaluable.

How to get in touch

To find out more about what we do or to get involved in the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Maternity & Neonatal Voices Partnership please get in touch.

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