

**Tower Hamlets
Maternity services
Community Insights Report
December 2018**

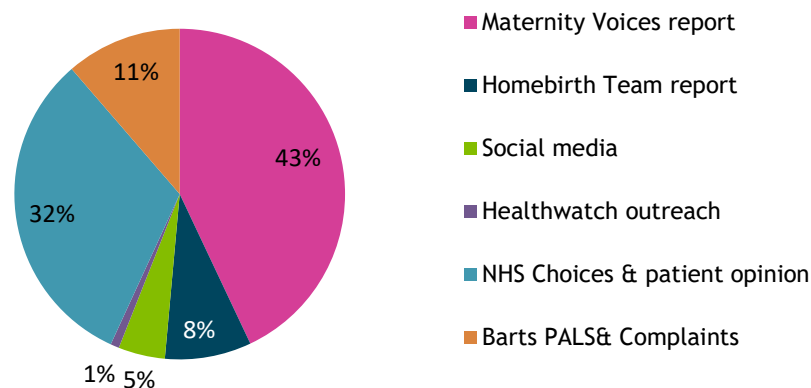


Maternity services in Tower Hamlets

Trends analysis report 2018

In 2018 to date, we have analysed **202 comments** from service users, identifying a total of **748 issues**.

Data sources



What we have learned

Compared with 2017, maternity services in the borough stayed broadly the same.

Aspects praised by patients

Service users generally feel well-informed about their options regarding when and how to give birth.

Mothers are generally happy with the quality of maternity services in Tower Hamlets and with the attitude of medical professionals supporting them.

Those who choose to give birth at home or in midwife-led units report a particularly good experience.

Postnatal midwives, health visitors, breastfeeding support services and children's centres are a valuable source of advice for new parents.

Aspects criticised by patients

Awareness of home birth is low, and many pregnant women still feel distrustful of it.

The antenatal clinic is very difficult to reach by telephone; and some service users reported admin issues around booking antenatal appointments.

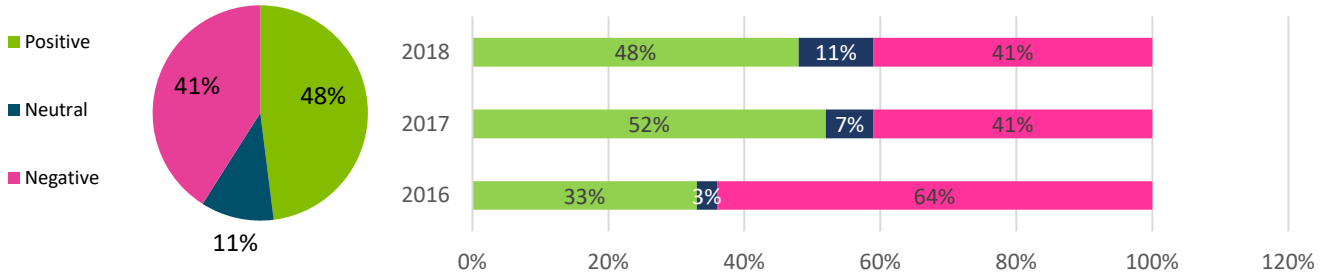
There are some reports of rudeness from reception staff.

A minority of patients experienced a lack of support on the postnatal ward. Some said that they felt ignored/ not listened too; they also complained about bed shortages and poor planning on the ward.

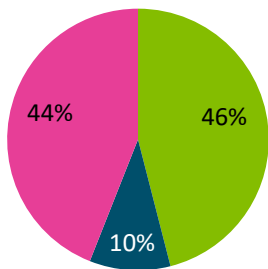
General opinion

Overall, opinion of maternity services in the borough is **mixed**.

Compared with 2017, it has stayed broadly the same, sustaining the improvements that have been made since 2016.

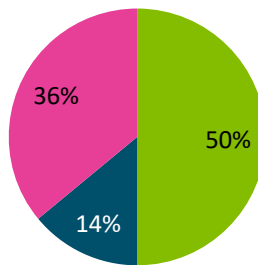


Antenatal services



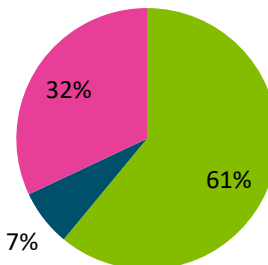
65 comments, 291 issues

Giving birth



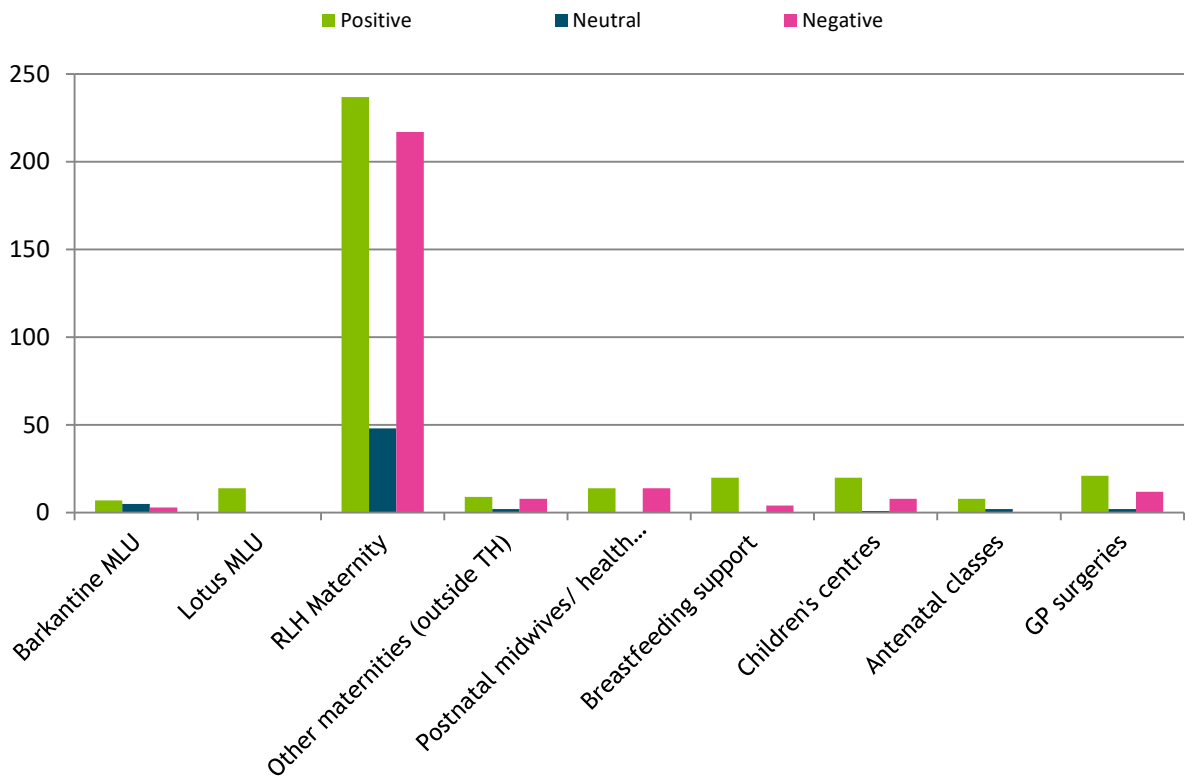
122 comments, 468 issues

Postnatal services



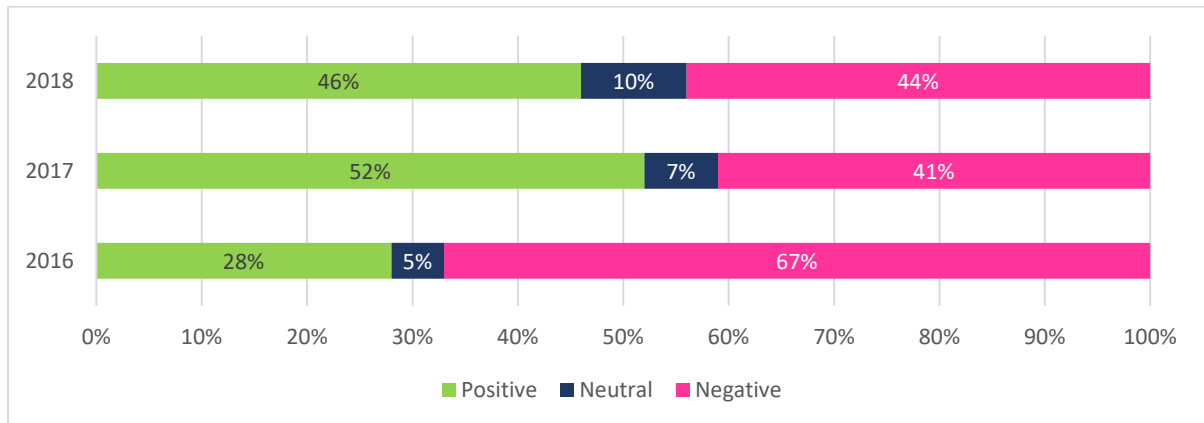
58 comments, 207 issues

Most discussed departments/ services



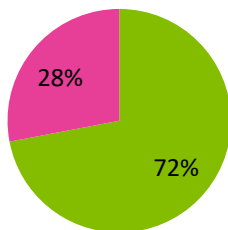
Antenatal services

Overall, opinion of antenatal services in the borough is **mixed**. Improvements made in 2017 compared with 2016 have been mostly sustained.



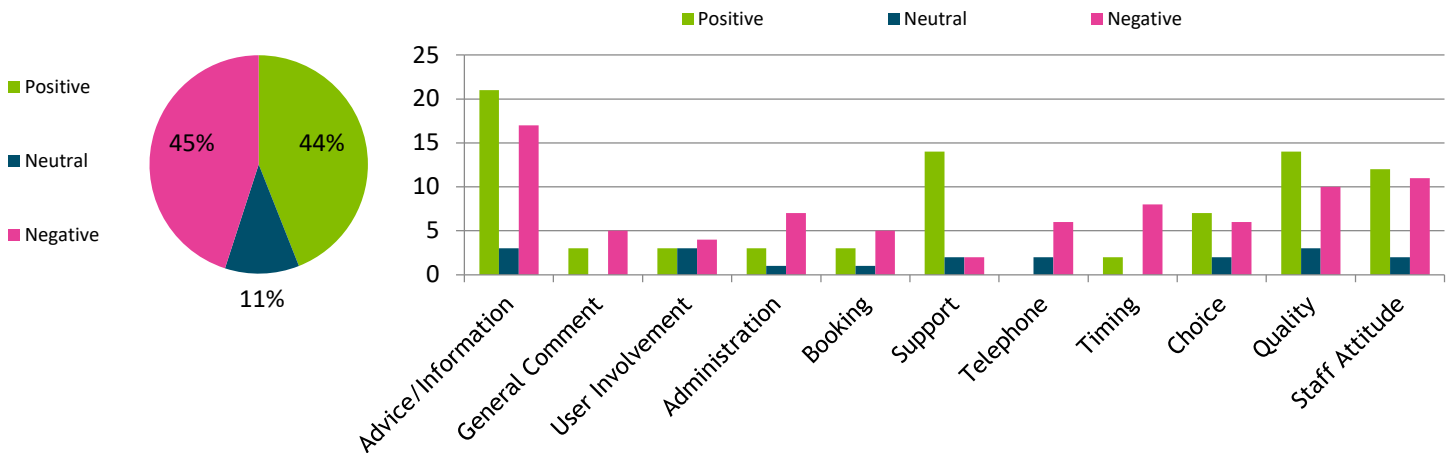
GP surgeries

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative



Only four people gave feedback on antenatal services provided by their GP surgeries. Two of them were broadly happy, one had a mixed experience, finding the midwife covering the practice more helpful than the GP, and one was dissatisfied with poor organisation in the practice.

- ☞ *Staff were very helpful and polite. I went to see the doctor who was extremely knowledgeable and helpful, and I was given detailed information about what I needed. They involved me in all the decision making and I am proud to be a part of this surgery.*
- ☞ *My GP told me about recommended vaccinations and vitamin supplements, foods to avoid, exercising during pregnancy, the dangers of smoking and alcohol, and about my mental health and well-being during pregnancy.*
- ☞ *First appointment GP was completely rubbish, just put me into the system and left me feeling deflated [but I was much happier with the homebirth team]. Barkantine clinic midwife who was covering at the GP, gave me the best support [when discussing my birth plan].*
- ☞ *Sadly, this practice is very disorganised. I went to the doctor to inform them of my pregnancy and they said they would refer me to the hospital for scans etc. However, I was never offered an appointment. When I phoned the surgery to find out what happened, they said they would look into it and phone the hospital and get back to me, but never did.*



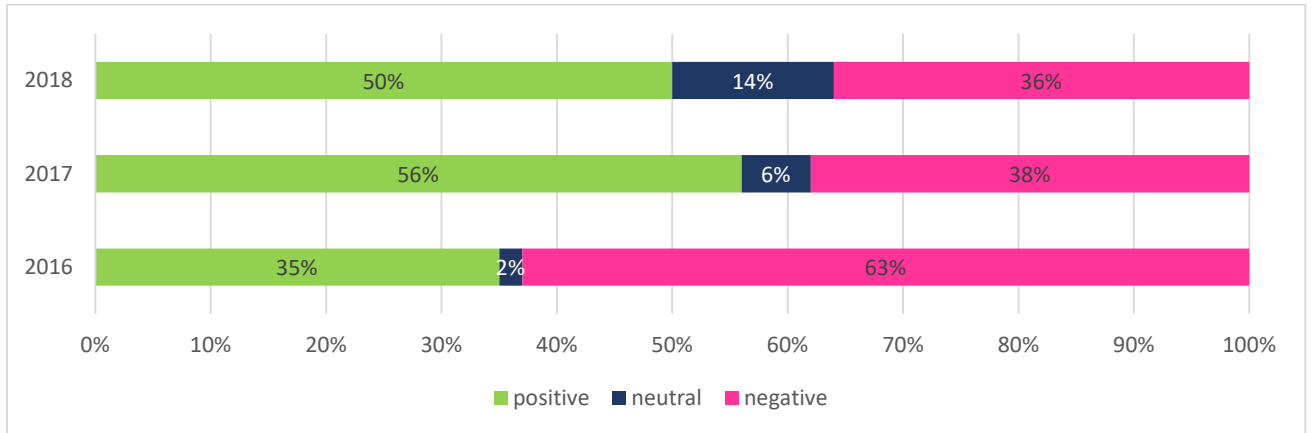
Expectant mothers feel generally well-informed about their options in terms of birth and antenatal care, and of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy. The majority feel well-supported and are happy with the caring, professional attitude of midwives.

On the other hand, service users complain about the telephone not being picked up, reception staff members being rude, communication being poor and the antenatal department generally being disorganised.

- I am currently 15 weeks pregnant and have been extremely impressed with the care I have received so far. I have had three appointments (including a promptly arranged specialist appointment) and each time have been seen on time, have had all my questions answered and the staff have been very professional and caring.*
- The main issue has been my waiting times. The booking letter said to leave 2 hours, but it actually took 5. Today my appointment was meant to be at 8:30am but it is now 10.57am. I was diagnosed with a urine infection (no symptoms) and no one told me. Only when I went to my GP for something else [I found out] I had to be given antibiotics. I hadn't. I do not know how communication is meant to work between the midwives and the GP.*
- I have been finding it very difficult calling the hospital (antenatal ward), since people don't answer the phone. If I have to change my appointment for some reason, I have to physically come to the hospital to do so, which is quite inconvenient. Generally the appointments with the midwives have been good and the reception team has been nice too. They have all been polite and gave me the information I needed.*
- I love the way you are looked after in the Anti-Natal Clinic, but the rudeness of Reception staff is making me think I should change hospital to be looked after while I am pregnant and after. When I was unwell and tried to call the clinic, for 3 days I could not get through to them. After 3 days of attempts, I walked directly to the clinic, asked Reception if I was meant to see my midwife of A&E, and I was wrongly sent to A&E, despite the member of staff at Reception was reading my notes, and the midwife had clearly requested me to go see her.*

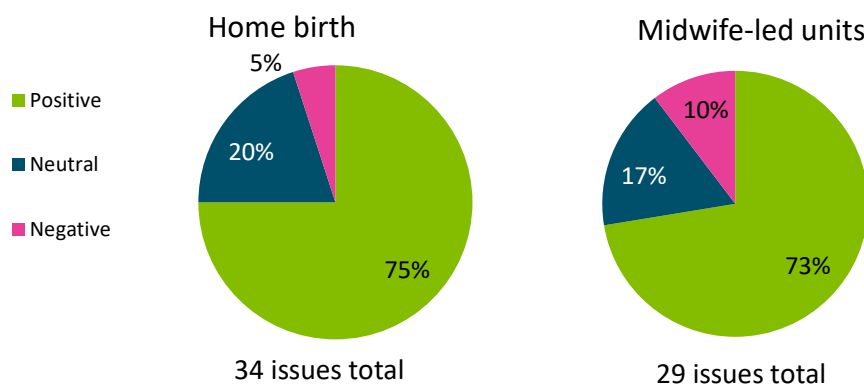
Giving birth

Overall, opinion of giving birth in the borough is **mixed**. Improvements made in 2017 compared with 2016 have been mostly sustained.



Homebirth and birth centres

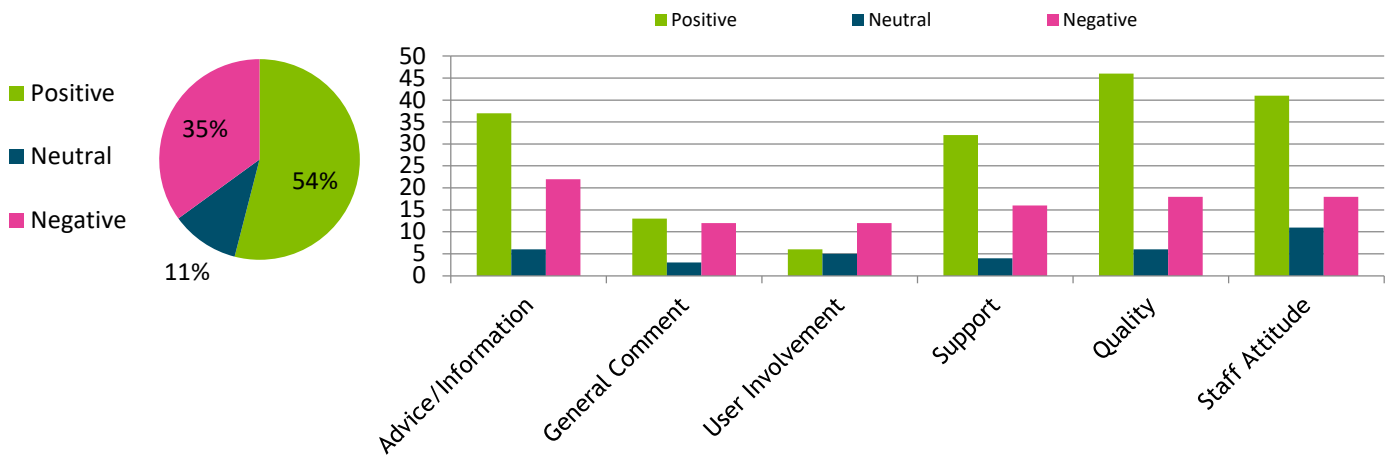
There are two midwife-led birth centres in Tower Hamlets, one located in the Royal London Hospital (the Lotus centre, opened in 2017) and one located at the Barkantine Practice, on the other side of the borough. In 2018, a homebirth team staffed by midwives from the Royal London Hospital also started to operate.



Women who did give birth at home or in midwife-led units gave near-unanimous positive feedback. However, only a minority of mothers in the borough (and a small number of respondents) did; overall, mothers see giving birth in the hospital as the safer option; awareness of the Homebirth team is particularly low.

- ☺ *Very happy with my experience giving birth. Best midwife and homebirth team, who were there for me before during and after the birth. I had an opportunity to meet the whole team before giving birth.*
- ☺ *I gave birth on January 21st at Lotus birth centre, and I couldn't ask for a better and supportive midwife. Great service, very helpful and encouraging.*
- ☺ *The Barkantine Birth Centre is the most amazing place to have your baby. All the midwives and staff are supporting from the moment you book with them. They provide 24/7 support regardless if its the smallest question. I cannot fault this place at all. My fourth baby and it couldn't have been made any easier. Thank you to all the staff esp X who delivered our lovely little boy. Best memorable experience. calm, peaceful and natural birth environment.*
- ☺ *I don't know anything about giving birth at home except it is mental and crazy! My sister's baby came unexpectedly at home and everyone was there - my mum, dad, the kids. It was really difficult and stressful. It is really interesting to hear about the homebirth team. I hadn't heard of them before. It is interesting that people actually choose to give birth at home and the bit about actually getting to know your midwife is amazing. My first baby was born at the hospital and it was OK, but I never saw the same person twice and you are on a production line. It was like 'congratulations' now move on to the next area and the next person comes in. It is different in our culture though. I think even if you are not living with your in-laws, it would just be seen as totally crazy as to why you would even do that. Everyone knows (or thinks they know!) that it s safest and more hyenic in hospital.*
- ☺ *[I gave birth in the hospital and] everything was good. All the midwives were very kind.. It was my 3rd baby. It has been fine every time. Not amazing. But OK. [Asking about Barkantine]. I would never go to the Barkantine. There are no doctors there. It is dangerous.*

The Royal London Hospital Maternity



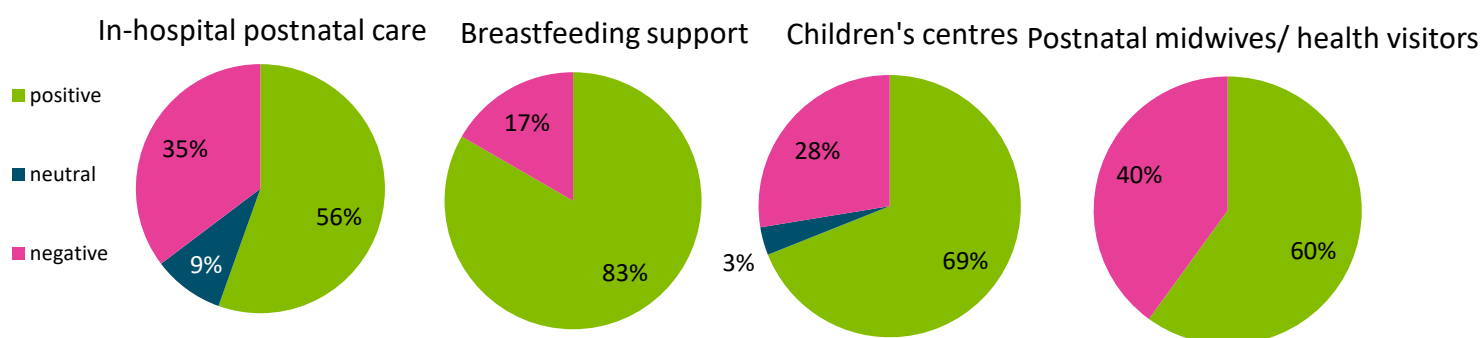
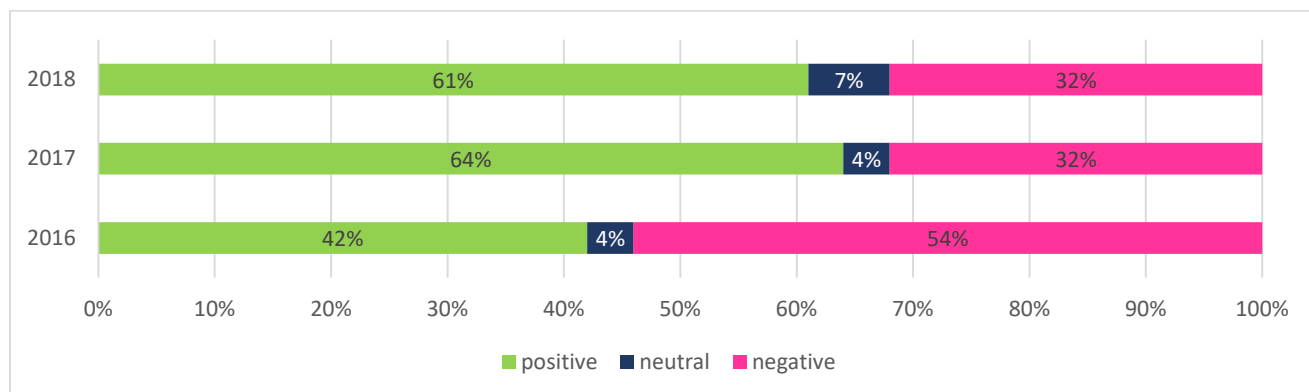
Most mothers were generally happy with their care and felt appropriately informed of their options about where to give birth and what to expect from the hospital. With few exceptions, they were pleased with the attitude of consultants and midwives.

A small number of patients report feeling unsupported and not listened to by medical staff; this issue came up specifically in relation to after-care following birth, rather than before or during birth.

- *The staff (especially those in the High Risk Maternity Unit) were unwavering in their determination to make my stay comfortable and provide the best possible care for myself and my new baby. They made sure all medical decisions were clearly explained and were very good at relieving any anxiety I had about my baby and being a new mum. The team of doctors and nurses helped me manage my Sickle Cell pain effectively and were very encouraging when it came to take the next step in my recovery treatment.*
- *After 3 days of labour pain I finally had my baby only through the emergency c-section. However, the staff on the labour ward were just fantastic. Extremely patient and generally cared about me and my health. Made me feel safe and calm. However, the after-birth care was horrid, nurses were rude and constantly ignored my calls for help. After operation I couldn't get off the bed to help myself -they didn't seem bothered. Extremely disappointed. Cried myself to sleep the first 2 nights due to helplessness. Had to stay in hospital after care for a whole week. Was a nightmare, had to beg to be discharged. Was on antibiotics as well as my baby. They would not explain why. If I asked questions I would get shouted at and told to rest. Did not discuss my health or my child's health with me, just did as they pleased!!*

Postnatal services

Overall, opinion of postnatal care in the borough is **mixed**. Improvements made in 2017 compared with 2016 have been mostly sustained.



Total issues: Hospital 119, breastfeeding support 24, children's centres 29, postnatal midwives 20

With some exceptions, a majority of mothers feel they continue to receive good care in hospital after giving birth. A small number of patients complained about lack of support, poor planning on the ward and bed shortages.

Postnatal midwives, breastfeeding support services and children's centres are seen as a valuable source of advice and support for new parents, although a minority of parents questioned the reliability of midwives/ health visitors and the validity of the information they gave.

In-hospital postnatal care

- *The only experience I had at Royal London Hospital was postnatal. We had a very good experience using the breastfeeding support team; they were very knowledgeable and gave a diagnosis of Tongue Tied and treatment for it very quickly. The aftercare support was also excellent.*
- *Overall, I would give a very positive feedback to the midwives and the staff working on the postnatal ward. Mostly they seem to care about the patients and are very supportive, helpful and responsive.*
- *I was admitted into hospital on Wednesday. I was told there was no beds for the twins I was expecting, yet I was kept in. I could have gone home. Unfortunately, due to a check-up that was not necessary, I had to stay in. The next few days were a nightmare.*
- *My sister had a baby. Her husband stayed in hospital with her and they didn't provide her with a bed. It would be good if they could provide smaller beds for carers on the side of patient beds.*

Postnatal midwives/ health visitors

- *Amazing, when I was stressed or down my midwife was happy to come visit and chat and I felt comfortable with her.*
- *Good, they were thorough and followed up on aspects of my health that hadn't been attuned to in the 5-day hospital stay post birth*
- *[They were] Okay, [but] not helpful about breastfeeding. Very confused and incorrect information regarding breastfeeding.*
- *Visits should be more spread throughout the first year. It felt there were too many at the beginning and then none after 3 months. More information should be given about introduction to solids.*

Breastfeeding support

- *Really helped me on my journey, they came the day after my birth. I was in complete shock at how difficult and painful it was, they also helped me to feed lying down.*
- *I really struggled with breast feeding. I went to their drop-in class at the hospital and had several visits but it was the 3rd person and maybe 7th intervention that someone did something helpful as opposed to show me a bloody crocheted boob! I think all of them should be trained in how to spot tongue tie and how to (with permission) offer some hands-on support.*

Children's centres

- *Isle of Dogs really clean good centre, Chrisp St a little tired and the coordinators didn't really help facilitate interaction between the mothers so everyone seemed to sit quietly in separate corners with their babies but overall amazing the have these services on offer.*