



# **15 steps for maternity**

## **Royal Cornwall Hospital 2020**

# Contents

---

Introduction	3
What is 15 steps?	4
What we did	5
Findings	6
Next steps	14
Thank you	15

# Introduction



Maternity Voices Partnerships (MVP's) are independently-led NHS working groups: a committee of women, pregnant people and their families, community groups, supporting organisations, local commissioners and providers working together to review and contribute to the development of local maternity care.

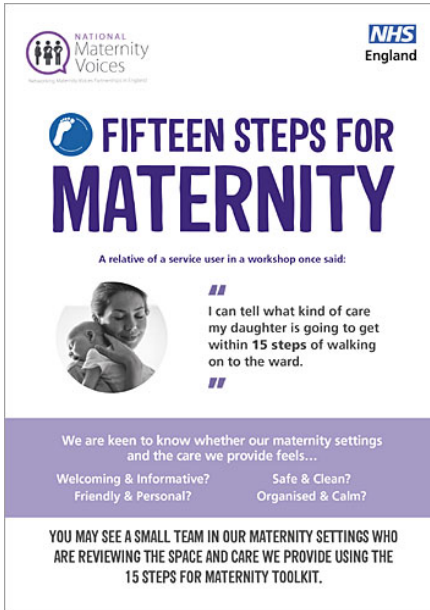
Kernow MVP exists to support the implementation of Better Births across Cornwall and The Isles of Scilly. We listen to and engage with those who have recently used our local maternity services and feed this back to those that commission and provide them. We advocate for the inclusion of service user voice and lived experience at all levels of designing, planning and delivering services.

I am proud to champion co-production that is meaningful, inclusive and sustainable, to support the transformation of maternity services for all women, birthing people and families across Cornwall and The Isles of Scilly

We provide critical friendship at a strategic level to support the implementation and improvement of maternity services across Cornwall and The isles of Scilly and work in partnership with the local maternity system. The Better Births Report (2016) says that maternity services should be co-produced with MVPs. To achieve co-production service users and lay people need to be involved from the start of creating and design of services and their input needs to be equally valued. One tool we have to do this is '15 steps in maternity'. This is a quality improvement toolkit and looks at QI from the perspective of the service user. Those that experience care are able to give some valuable and varied feedback as well as offer unique and often innovative suggestions.

Nicki Burnett  
Kernow Maternity Voices Partnership Chair

# What is 15 steps?



15 steps is a toolkit developed and published by NHS England to be used by Maternity Voice Partnerships to support them to elevate the voices of the service users and allow them to explore collaborative working to review, explore and design services within maternity units. It was inspired by a mother whose daughter required frequent hospital visits.

The idea is for service users to be able to experience the spaces where care is provided and to be able to express how they make them feel. 15 steps provides guides to be used by small groups while they spend some time in each area of the hospital. It uses an observational approach where volunteers are encouraged to write about the things they notice and assess them using four separate themes, which are;

- Welcoming and informative
- Safe and clean
- Friendly and personal
- Organised and calm

These themes were identified by co-designing this toolkit with a group of diverse service users and representatives.

I can tell what kind of care my daughter is going to get within 15 steps of walking on to the ward



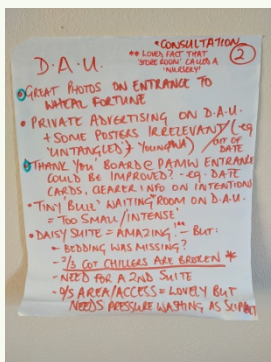
# What we did?

Our first 15 steps concentrated on Royal Cornwall Hospital. Our visit took place on 29 January 2020 and during the day we visited;

- Wheal Fortune
- Wheal Rose
- Day assessment unit
- Delivery Suite
- Truro birth centre
- Neonatal unit



We visited these areas in small groups and spent about 20 minutes in each location. We then spent time discussing and recording our observations together. Some of the feedback and suggestions were immediately fed back to the maternity leadership team directly, and the rest was collated together and put into this report. The group was comprised of recent service users, committee members, community representatives, and staff from Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust, Cornwall Foundation Trust and Kernow Clinical Commissioning Group



# Findings

We have themed the feedback collected during the day into the main themes suggested by the 15 steps framework. Here we present comments, suggestions and real life stories of those who took part.

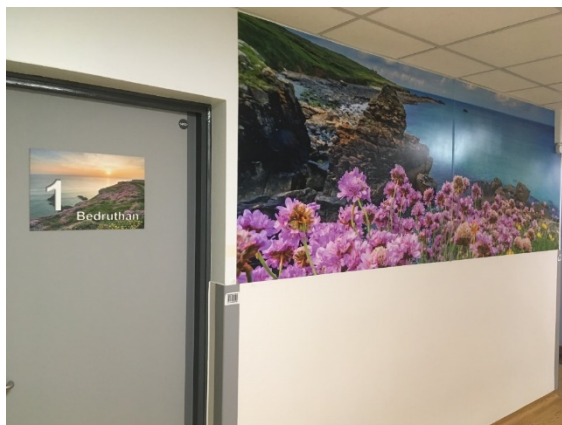
## Welcoming and Informative

The majority of staff were friendly and helpful and on the whole there was a warm welcome for us. However there were a few concerns noted as not all staff knew about our visit and there were some slightly curt responses. The birth centre was mentioned specifically as having a welcoming and calm atmosphere however it was noted that entry to Neonatal can take a long time when busy.

In some areas there was a wealth of information although it was noted that some of this was outdated and there was a concern about private advertising and whether there is a process for approving who gets to advertise. Some of the information was really useful and accessible but there was a lack of diversity in the imagery, lots of intimidating clinical information on the walls in patient facing areas, and very little safeguarding information displayed.

The rooms on the delivery suite were not welcoming or comfortable. There was a lack of any information to promote active birth, skin to skin or infant feeding here. The pictures on the walls of Wheal Rose day room really helped the atmosphere although it would be lovely to have a theatre birth represented.

“ I am so impressed with how different delivery suite is now. What a huge improvement! ”



## Recommendation 1

Co-create some posters for the delivery suite to promote active birth.

## Recommendation 2

Set up rooms on the delivery suite to be welcoming - mood lighting, birth ball, comfy chair etc.

## Recommendation 3

Update information in all areas to ensure accuracy and improve diversity of imagery.

## Recommendation 4

Improve signage to kitchen and other patient facilities to ensure everyone is aware.

## Recommendation 5

Work towards making patient facilities more homely and less clinical, move bins away from toys and look at using pictures similar to Wheal Rose dayroom in other areas.



## Safe and clean

On the whole everyone agreed that the hospital in general felt safe and clean. All the areas we visited promoted hand washing and had easy access to sinks and alcohol sanitising gel. Certain areas are very dated and some of the buildings in general are tired, but levels of cleanliness were high.

Privacy and dignity - There was an incident while we were visiting the delivery suite where a door was left open and we had to remove ourselves from the area while an intimate exam was being performed in full view of the corridor. It was difficult to tell which rooms were occupied and which were empty.

Safety and emergencies - Users would like some 'Who's who' boards to explain clearly who everyone is, to understand which staff they should alert if help is needed. It was also said that they didn't always know how to get help, especially at night when sometimes staffing was low. Positive feedback was given about the clinical equipment in the birth centre, it was accessible but discrete which helped birthing people feel safe as well as calm.

Promotion of safe sleep, skin to skin and safeguarding - There was no information displayed about skin to skin and how to do this safely, no safeguarding information easily available and no promotion of safe sleep. It was noted that while much of this information is contained in the Essential Guide there is not a consistent policy of ensuring this is read and understood by parents. Within the group visiting not all parents had left hospital with their Essential Guide as it had been taken away with their notes.

Feedback and support - There was no information visible about the MVP or Professional Midwifery Advocate support, or signposting to how to raise a concern or get more support if needed.



## Recommendation 6

Develop a clear signage system for when rooms are occupied and ensure doors and curtains are always closed before any examination or intervention is performed.

## Recommendation 7

Update safety information ensuring safeguarding information is clearly displayed in all toilets.

## Recommendation 8



Clear information on how to access more support i.e. MVP or PMA and who to contact if you have concerns about your care. This is needed in all areas.



## Friendly and personal

Personalisation of care was not actively promoted or displayed anywhere, although some of the users that were with us commented that they had received great personalised care during their time in hospital. It would have been lovely to have a display of what has been achieved so far with continuity of care and promotion of the four choices for place of birth that are available in Cornwall.

Staff were friendly and happy to answer questions when asked. There were two very different experiences of caesarean birth in the group, one felt that staff had gone above and beyond to ensure her experience was positive and personal, listening to what was important to her and ensuring she felt safe and supported during the whole experience. The other woman felt that she was robbed of her birth experience - the feedback about the room she waited in for her elective caesarean was that it did not feel special or relaxing and it was felt that often this is not seen as a birth experience and is forgotten about. People who choose or need a caesarean want to be able to make plans and have a positive experience and calm environment.

 I just wanted to have my special day, enjoy some massage, feel excited and get skin to skin like those in the birth centre. My experience is just as important as theirs. 

Daisy Suite was a wonderful area to support parents in the most difficult time. Users were concerned about what happens if more than one family need it? The outside entrance also needed some maintenance and the cold cots were broken. Everyone felt this was an invaluable resource and should be supported and extended if at all possible.

There was not any discussion or information on personalisation of birth experience - we knew there was aromatherapy available but there was no information about it. No information on birth planning on antenatal ward. The kitchen and family facilities on neonatal were great although communication of what is available could be improved, this feedback was the same for the delivery suite. Service users were unsure whether there are any partner facilities on Wheal Fortune. Hand expressing packs given to neonatal families to support infant feeding are amazing and make a big difference.

## Organised and calm

The feeling of organisation and calm varied across the settings we visited. Some areas were cluttered with cages, bags of recycling and other equipment in the corridors and stored in communal areas. The decor in the birth centre and delivery suite promoted a calm environment with calm colours and beautiful scenery depicted on the walls. There was a lot of foot traffic on the birth centre and the buzzer could be heard repeatedly. The day room on Wheal Rose felt relaxed and was in a quiet area, the day room on Wheal Fortune seemed to be used as a waiting room and had equipment stored there so it did not feel as homely and calm.

“ I wish they would have written my name and their names on my board, everyone kept getting my name wrong and I never knew the names of the people caring for me. Made it feel really impersonal. ”

Neonatal provided a calm welcoming environment although space around the cots is limited and can feel intimidating because of the amount of equipment. Staff seemed to work hard to include parents in their baby's care and create a calm environment even when under stress. There is not always space for parents to be with their baby 24/7.

Staff calmness and approachability varied across the settings. In the busier areas there was a feeling of pressure and higher stress levels. Service users reported feeling like an inconvenience if they rang their bell and sometimes were waiting an extended period of time before being answered.



## Recommendation 9

Display the choices for place of birth in Cornwall – Maybe 'Ask your midwife about your birth choices' in the Healthy Cornwall waiting area?

## Recommendation 10

Work on the caesarean pathway and recovery room to improve consistency and support personalisation i.e. skin to skin, lighting, music, gentle caesareans.

## Recommendation 11

Ensure birth choices are offered and discussed such as aromatherapy, wireless telemetry, TENS. Can this be put on a poster?

## Recommendation 12

Clear feeding and support plans made for postnatal, to reduce the need for repeating information and receiving conflicting advice from different professionals, as well as ensuring the parents understand the information given.

“ My caesarean experience couldn't be more different. I felt cared for and listened to throughout, they understood what was important to me and my partner. Supported immediate skin to skin and dimmed the lights and it was magical. ”

### Recommendation 13

Designated storage space for equipment and domestic waste to keep corridors and communal spaces clear. Checked as part of daily ward rounds.

### Recommendation 14

Work towards creating a relaxing communal area on Wheal Fortune with access to refreshments that can be used by families especially during visiting when bed spaces are very cramped.

### Recommendation 15

Remind all staff to introduce themselves and write their names on the board as well as ensure they ask pronouns and how to pronounce names correctly.

### Recommendation 16

Information packs for each area, for example meal service times, map of where facilities are, information on how to call for support and where to access refreshments in between meals etc.

### Recommendation 17

A recurrent theme of feedback is communication, especially on the postnatal ward, which was experienced on the day. Look at organising some training on language and impact of poor communication.

# Next steps

---

15 steps was a great success and was incredibly worthwhile for all involved. It provided such a unique way of reviewing the services provided and seeing things from a new perspective.

We plan to build on the success next year and grow the project to include some of the community venues as well as the hospital. We feel that repeating this event each year will allow us all to review changes and document improvements.

We will present and discuss this report with the maternity team at RCHT and the Local Maternity System Board and together we will create an action plan to monitor the progress of the recommendations made within this report.

To find out more about what we do or to get involved please do get in touch

**Kernow maternity voices partnership**  
**6 Walsingham Place**  
**Truro**  
**Cornwall**  
**TR1 2RP**

**[www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk/maternity-voices-partnership](http://www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk/maternity-voices-partnership)**

**email: [kernowmaternityvoices@gmail.com](mailto:kernowmaternityvoices@gmail.com)**

**@KernowMVP**

# Thank you

---

**Thank you to everyone that supported this project and worked hard to make it possible:**

**Georgie Watson – Chair, Kernow Maternity Voices Partnership 2018-2020**

**NHS Kernow**

**CIOS Local Maternity System**

**Royal Cornwall Hospital maternity leadership team**

**Kernow Maternity Voices Partnership Committee**

**Healthwatch Cornwall**

**All the families, service users and representatives from around Cornwall.**

Kernow Maternity Voices Partnership  
6 Walsingham Place  
Truro  
Cornwall  
TR1 2RP

[www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk/maternity-voices-partnership](http://www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk/maternity-voices-partnership)

email: [kernowmaternityvoices@gmail.com](mailto:kernowmaternityvoices@gmail.com)

@KernowMVP