



Healthwatch
Together

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool,
Cumberland, Lancashire and Westmorland
and Furness working in partnership

Maternity and Neonatal Matters

Summary of follow-up activity 2025



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Glossary

LMNS – Local Maternity and Neonatal System

LSC – Lancashire and South Cumbria

HWT – Healthwatch Together

PCN – Primary Care Network

MNVP – Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership

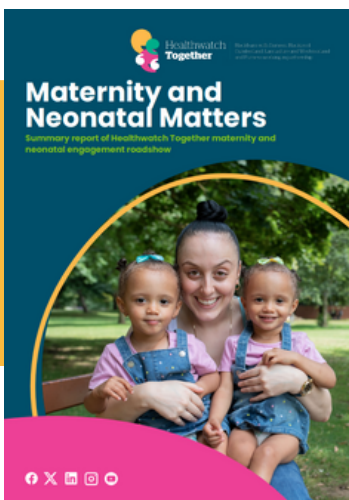
Introduction

In 2024, the Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) for Lancashire and South Cumbria commissioned Healthwatch Together (HWT) to speak to women and families about their experiences of maternity and neonatal services.

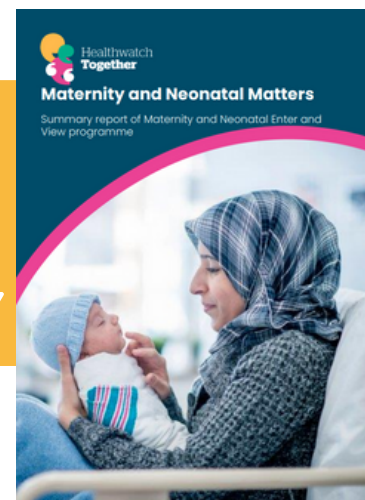
During March 2024, HWT conducted an engagement roadshow to speak directly to women and families about these experiences. During this roadshow engagement, **202** people shared their experiences and HWT attended **26** community groups.

To compliment the roadshow, a series of Enter and View visits to maternity units were completed. In total **11** Enter and View's took place at Maternity Unit Ward D- Blackpool Victoria Hospital, Fylde Coast Birth Centre, Blackburn Birthing Centre, Antenatal Ward- Burnley General Hospital, Rossendale Birth Centre, Chorley Birth Centre, Preston Birth Centre, Sharoe Green Antenatal Clinic, Preston, Maternity Unit - Royal Lancaster Infirmary, South Lakes Birth Centre - Furness General Hospital, Barrow, and Helme Chase - Westmorland General Hospital, Kendal.

Following this activity, two summary reports were created and presented to the LMNS and Hospital Trust representatives.



Read the full reports here



In both reports, recommendations were made to help improve service delivery for women and families.

There were some examples of great working practice including caring and compassionate staff, people being provided a choice of preferred place of birth feeling informed in their care and information being easy to understand.

Although some recommendations varied between Hospital Trusts, three recommendations applied to all Trusts across Lancashire and South Cumbria.

1.

Work with PCN's to promote the importance of 6-8 week postnatal checks for all babies and parents, including fathers and partners.

2.

Ensure all individuals have a personalised care plan, coproduced with a midwife or obstetrician, to enable patients to feel empowered and in control of their care and pregnancy journey.

3.

Aim for all individuals to have one midwife throughout their pregnancy journey for consistency of care and to rebuild rapport and trust. When this is not possible, ensure that the reasons for this are communicated to the patient.

To measure impact from these recommendations, along with local recommendations, and to continue highlighting recent experiences from women and families, HWT conducted a follow-up period of engagement in 2025.



About Healthwatch Together

Healthwatch was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 as an independent consumer champion to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

The role of a local Healthwatch is to:



Listen to people, especially those who are most vulnerable, to understand their experiences and what matters most to them

Influence those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and into the future

Empower and inform people to get the most from their health and social care services and encourage other organisations to do the same.





Healthwatch Together (HWT) is the collaboration of five Healthwatch across the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS). HWT works in partnership to effectively operate over the whole footprint and consists of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen, Healthwatch Blackpool, Healthwatch Cumberland, Healthwatch Lancashire, and Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness.

Each Healthwatch organisation works in their own local authority area and is their own unique entity, providing a local approach to community engagement.

During this engagement activity, Healthwatch Cumberland did not take part.

Methodology

During April and May 2025, each Healthwatch undertook a tailored approach to assessing impact in their local Trust, following last years reports.

It was decided that individual Healthwatch would review recommendations made to their local Trust and evaluate any changes that have been made. From this, each Healthwatch decided which Trust site to revisit for and Enter and View, as well as interviewing Trust representatives for information and speak to women and families individually to gather personal experiences.

Alongside this, Healthwatch Together produced a joint campaign to raise awareness around the importance of the 6-8 week postnatal checks following the joint recommendation made in the previous roadshow report.

Enter and View Re-visits

What is an Enter and View?

Healthwatch have a power under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to carry out Enter and View visits. This means that Healthwatch can enter health and social care services and see them in action. Healthwatch representations will make observations, speak to people using the service and staff member to inform an independent report and make recommendations if required.

It enables Healthwatch to identify what is working well with services, and where they could be improved.

During March– April 2024, the Healthwatch Together collaborative conducted **11** Enter and View visits across Maternity services in Lancashire and South Cumbria. Each Healthwatch published individual Enter and View reports which were sent to each Trust for comment. These reports can be found on the corresponding Healthwatch websites.

A summary report was also published, highlighting areas of good practice, similarities between Trusts and recommendations made for service improvement.

Read the full Healthwatch Together Enter and View Summary Report [here](#)

As part of the Healthwatch Together follow-up work, it was decided that each Healthwatch would review its previous Enter and View reports from last year.

Each Healthwatch decided whether or not a revisit to the service was required on an individual basis, utilising local intelligence and information from last years reports.

For this report, these re-visits have been summarised. You can find the full reports published on each Healthwatch website, details of which are listed in our contents page and appendix.



Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

Maternity Ward D

On 27th March 2025, the Healthwatch Blackpool team visited Maternity Ward D at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. During this visit, 10 people provided their feedback about their experience.

Patients stated that they felt comfortable speaking with staff on the ward when asking questions about their care. Most patients rated the quality of care positively, describing staff as friendly, caring and supportive.

One patient said that they had experienced delays in receiving medication, and another patient highlighted a miscommunication with medication from staff.

"I feel considerably better than 6 years ago. They were so stretched and overworked last time but it doesn't feel like that this time. Feels like there's enough staff and I've been well looked after. The staff feel really kind."

There was mixed feedback in relation to breastfeeding support. One individual who received support found it differed between staff members and suggested a more personalised approach and improved staff continuity.

Most patients found the ward to be clean, however mentioned that the chairs should be cleaned more often. Patients expressed positive feedback in relation to visiting hours, and a huge positive that partners were able to stay overnight.



Recommendations

- Implement a regular cleaning and deodorising schedule for all patient chairs to maintain hygiene
- Implement continuity between breastfeeding support among staff
- Ensure all staff are updated on handovers and note systems
- Some patients noted a delay in receiving medication, where possible reduce these waiting times

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

Fylde Coast Birth Centre

On 24th April 2025, the Healthwatch Blackpool team visited the Fylde Coast Birth Centre, which is situated within Blackpool Victoria Hospital. At the time of the visit, there were 5 patients on the delivery suite and Healthwatch Blackpool were able to speak with 1 patient.

Staff members were found to be kind and welcoming. The patient spoken to was able to share a positive experience, highlighting the attentiveness of staff, cleanliness of the suite, and ease of using the Badger app for accessing information. They felt well-informed, involved in care decisions and appreciated the consistency of staff contact, but did note less interaction with the midwife compared to past experiences.

"I've not really seen my midwife as much as I can remember with my other two children. Obviously I have maternity day unit and triage if I need to – I know how to contact. Midwife was supportive."

"I feel I have been involved in decisions and chosen my birthing plan. I am having an elective sections and it was easy to arrange."



Recommendations

- Provide a comfortable temperature as it was extremely hot within rooms and corridors
- Ensure that posters and QR codes are visible within rooms and main corridors to allow more opportunities for feedback
- Have notice boards visible containing information for patients, such as local advocacy support and local classes and activities

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

Royal Preston Hospital Antenatal Clinic

On 8th April 2025, the Healthwatch Lancashire team visited the antenatal Clinic at Royal Preston Hospital. During the visit 4 patients and 3 members of staff provided feedback.

Highlights from the visit included improved and clearer ways for patients to provide feedback, including a comments box, and a move towards better allocation of people who have multiple appointments.

Patients reported that they found it easier to locate and check in to the clinic compared to the last visit. Patients were seen quickly during the visit, and staff were observed to greet patients and escorting people into their appointment.

"I've been here a few times in the past couple of months and the survey and comments box was a nice touch, but it seems to have been taken down now, it would be nice to have that out so patients can leave feedback when they want to."

Improvements following last visit

- Posters added to reception to inform patients how to check in for appointments
- Poster explaining that clinics can run later and a member of staff will tell patients if they are running longer than usual
- Staff present in the waiting area to support patients and update them on wait times
- PALS information clearly visible
- Internal surveys for patients to provide feedback directly
- Updated scan leaflets with more information for patients
- For patients on the multiple scan pathway, they now ensure that their scans are booked for earlier in the day so if a follow up appointment is needed they can have it the same day
- MNVP banner on display in the waiting area
- DadPad booklets available for patients to take away



Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

Chorley Birth Centre

On 9th April 2025, the Healthwatch Lancashire team visited the antenatal Clinic at Royal Preston Hospital. Along with observations, both patients and staff provided feedback. Since the Enter and View visit in 2024, Chorley Birth Centre received Gold Star accreditation for the support and services provided.

Healthwatch Lancashire spoke to two patients who were positive about their experiences at the birth centre. They said that it was easy to access parking, the centre facilities are up to date, pleasant and comfortable.

"This is only my second visit so far, but its great, they ask a lot of questions which means they won't miss anything."

"Staff are nice, I feel listened to and they make sure you look after yourself."

Improvements following last visit



- Additional phone system implemented to allow for confidential calls to be taken in a separate room
- Consultations held between staff at the Preston and Chorley birth centres to address concerns about deployment between sites and improve communication
- Upskilling sessions to ensure that staff members skills are recognised
- Closed urine sample pots
- Relunched Profession Midwife Advocate for staff to access support, along with Trauma Risk Management Training
- Increase in partnership working with the local MNVP lead who visits the centre on a quarterly basis to listen to families about their experiences

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay

Helme Chase Maternity Unit

On 24th April 2025, the Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness team visited the Helme Chase Maternity Unit at Westmorland General Hospital.

During the Enter and View last year, **8** recommendations were made. The purpose of the revisit was to evaluate any progress made on these recommendations.

Key improvements implemented

Signage and accessibility

Language support signage is now displayed at reception, highlighting availability of BSL and interpretation services via the 'language on wheels' trolley. A multilingual welcome notice installation remains delayed.



Patient amenities

Reception now displays signage offering private discussion areas, though uptake has been low. Staff are trained to proactively identify patients requiring privacy. Water is now available in waiting areas during clinic hours, though clearer signage about availability is recommended.

Outdated MNVP materials have been replaced with current resources including banners, posters, and leaflets. New inclusive materials target LGBTQ+ and seldom-heard groups, with multilingual birthing position posters and digital QR code resources proving particularly effective.

Safety enhancements and operational updates

Midwife numbers increased from nine to 14 full-time equivalent posts since reopening, reducing caseloads and improving continuity of care. New rotas include spare capacity during normal hours.

Despite MP-attended reopening celebrations and media coverage, community uncertainty persists due to the unit's closure history, affecting some families' confidence in service reliability.

Outstanding actions

- Uniform notice board delayed pending national uniform upgrade.
- Multilingual welcome notice installation postponed.
- Need for clearer water availability signage.

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay

South Lakes Birth Centre

On 2nd May 2025, the Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness team visited the South Lakes Birth Centre at Furness General Hospital.

During the Enter and View last year, 13 recommendations were made. This revisit was made to evaluate any progress made on these recommendations.

Safer discharge and ongoing decisions

Expectant mothers now receive more personalised and safer care when sent home before labour begins. Following our recommendation to consider individual circumstances such as travel distance and driving conditions, the Trust has introduced dynamic risk assessments for all discharges from triage and SLBC. This means each woman's unique situation is properly evaluated before discharge, and all families are given direct contact numbers to the ward with reassurance they can call at any time.

This change ensures no family faces uncertainty or feels abandoned during the crucial period before active labour begins.

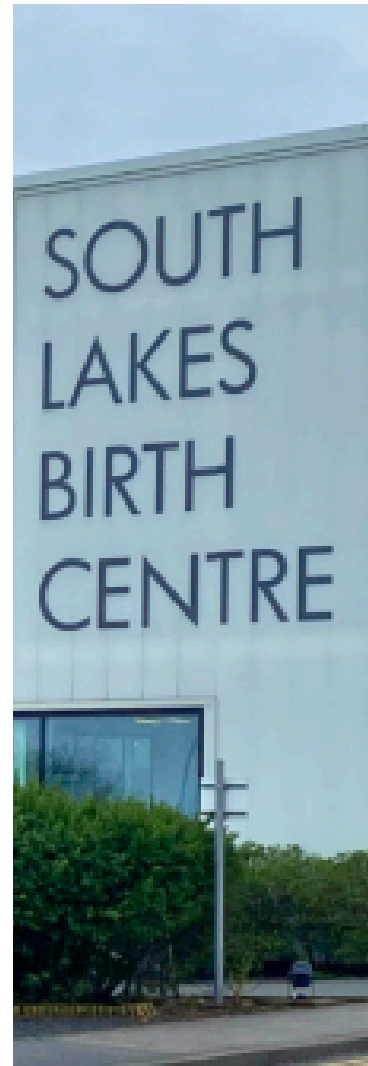
While the redesign of SLBC into intrapartum (labour) and postnatal wards and staff teams is not currently possible it remains under review.

Better care through improved staffing, enhanced professional support and continuity of care

Mums-to-be and new mums are cared for by more skilled, better-supported staff thanks to comprehensive staffing improvements. The Trust has created and funded a dedicated Recruitment and Retention Lead, ensuring appropriate staff levels are maintained.

A wellbeing action tracker supports staff through professional development, flexible retirement, and return from maternity leave, while a professional midwifery advocate provides immediate support after traumatic events, as well as supporting restorative supervision.

International staff are supported by the education team with their development and integration. Supplemental staff are proportionate to registered members of staff. A co-ordinator monitors staffing day-to-day, with a daily shift escalation possible. Midwives also rotate between working in the community & on the unit.



University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay

South Lakes Birth Centre

For patients, this translates to care from midwives who are better supported, less burnt out, and able to focus fully on their needs. Shift managers can now concentrate on supervision and quality oversight rather than direct patient care, ensuring higher standards across the unit.

Speaking up for person-centred care and patient safety

Patients are welcomed and supported when they need it with information for LGBTQ+, neurodiverse, and those whose first language is not English. Patients can get information and support when they need it from HWW&F posters in all rooms and on noticeboards, as well as PALS leaflets at reception and QR code links so a complaint can be raised confidentially.

Patients have a strong voice on service development with MNVP representation on Patient Experience Group, 'birth-reflective service' design with parent input. Small but meaningful comfort improvements such as hot and cold drinks for partners had already been actioned.



Personal Experiences

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

In April this year, Healthwatch Blackpool gathered three in-depth personal experiences from three women who had recently accessed maternity services at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

A summary of these experiences have been detailed below. This includes an additional experience shared with Healthwatch Lancashire who had a home birth and received care from Blackpool Teaching Hospitals.

Pregnancy

Information received during pregnancy appeared to be mixed from the women who provided their experience.

"I did have a birthing plan but I wrote it myself as the midwife didn't seem as bothered. I did a lot of research as I wanted to be really informed, although the midwife just flicked through it; I feel that they could be a bit more focused on our wishes."

"Early on when I had appointments with community midwives, I got a lot of information. Then when I was given a designated midwife, I don't feel like I was provided with a lot of information, only probably from the 12 week mark. I wasn't told about birth bumps and beyond classes until the final appointment with the health visitor. All information was clear and understandable, I was given a lot of information post pregnancy, websites, leaflets."

"At the beginning it was unclear on how I got onto the referral process, it wasn't clear to me that I had to self-refer, the GP would tell me one thing, and then I would go online and read something else. I attended a group meeting with other expectant mums and I was given information about what to expect there."

"I saw the same midwife, but on occasions they weren't there and there was no prior notice of this before my appointment."

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

Birth

Overall, experiences shared around birth were positive, specifically highlighting the care and attention received from members of staff.

"I was worried that when it came to the birth I would have to go into hospital as there'd be no midwives available, as it really does depend on whether anyone is free at that time or not. However, I was really lucky as the hospital sent over a community midwife; she was brilliant with me and let me just get on with things my way and only intervened when necessary. I felt very listened to."

"My experience on the delivery suite was really positive, all of the midwives were amazing. I was induced and I had quick access to pain relief and they took good care of me whilst i was in labour."

"My birth experience was overall good but even though it was an emergency as his heart rate dropped and he had to be pulled out, it didn't feel like an emergency, due to staff remaining calm and professional, and even in theatre everyone was so lovely and everyone made me feel at ease. They put the radio on and asked me which music would I like to listen to. Even going in I was so hot and needed water but I couldn't as I was going into theatre, someone came back after and gave me a huge jug of water, which was nice. It was a really good experience even when it was an emergency."

However, some people described their experience of Ward D at Blackpool Victoria Hospital as uncomfortable, rushed and felt as though they were left to figure things out by themselves.

"I feel on ward D we were kind of just left to try and figure things out and if we did ask for help with something it would take a while for them to get round to us and when they did it felt rushed."

"The ward was horrific, the staff were great but the ward was uncomfortable, small, stuffy, inconsiderate parents in the bays – we didn't get any sleep, it was awful- that was the worst experience of the entire pregnancy and birth, staying in that bay – it was not good."

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

Staff

People provided positive experiences about staff that interacted with them, including midwives throughout their pregnancy and birth.

"The midwives were very informative and clear, especially when it came to having a home birth, and that should there be a need I may have to go into hospital. I was fine with this as I know anything can happen on the day. I found it really good that they were honest and clear with me."

"My partner said the midwives on the delivery suite were really helpful showing him how to do different things for our daughter."

"Throughout the pregnancy and throughout labour, the team at the hospital they were really really good."

Aftercare

We received mixed responses regarding postnatal support, with some people receiving good postnatal care and others feeling as though this was lacking.

"So what was weird is that I've never seen my midwife since giving birth, she came to see me in hospital, I'm unsure if that was part of the process but she just came to see me. I find it weird that I haven't seen her since, I have texted her and it's been informal support but I haven't seen her."

"Not enough support postpartum, I'm fortunate I have a good support network but I imagine if you didn't have that and you were just relying on maternity services, you would struggle as you don't really get a lot."

"Before leaving hospital they make you watch videos of things like sudden cot death, but there's so much going on and it would be easier to take stuff away and watch in your own time. It's a lot and it's overwhelming especially when it's showing you what to do if your baby turns blue and it's very scary."

"The day after birth, the community midwife came to visit us, which was good as we had loads of questions which she answered and was helpful."

In May 2025, **50** people shared their recent experiences through engaging with Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen and completing the survey.

Before, during and after pregnancy- what matters to you the most?

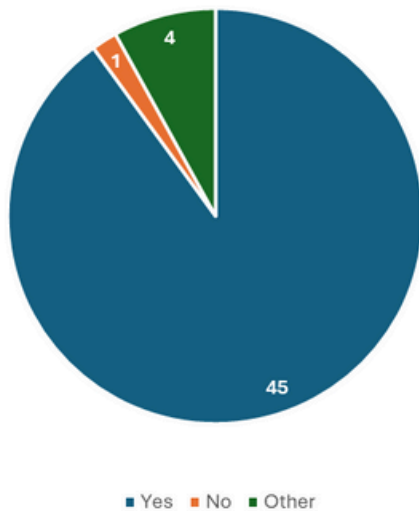


A horizontal bar chart with two categories: 'No' and 'Yes'. The 'No' bar is orange and extends to the value 27. The 'Yes' bar is dark blue and extends to the value 13. The x-axis is labeled from 0 to 30 in increments of 5.

Response	Count
No	27
Yes	13

Answers to this question included; Badger App, Fertility treatment, midwives, family, Doctors, early pregnancy unity and from previous pregnancies.

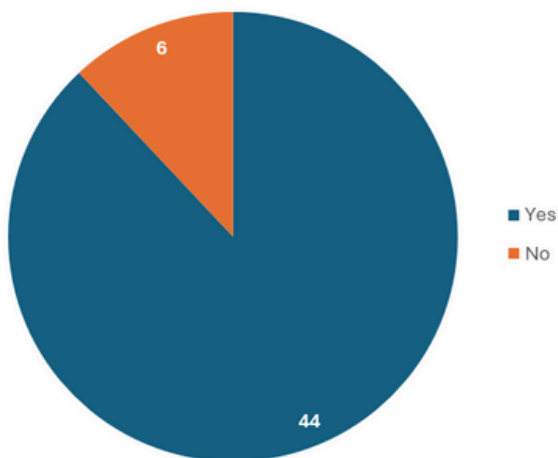
During your pregnancy, did you and your partner (if applicable) receive all the information you needed in a way that was easy for you to understand?



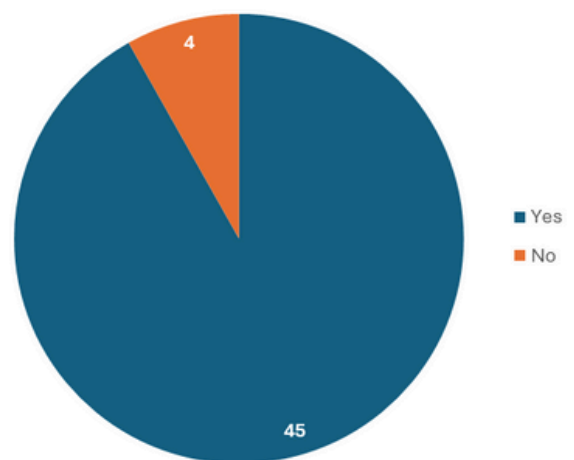
Other comments:

- "Just a lot I didn't know and I got contradicted messages"
- "I would of liked more information on what an induction was"
- "My language is Kurdish and I received all information in Kurdish"
- "50/50"

Were you and your partner (if applicable) provided with a point of contact if you had any questions throughout your pregnancy?



Did you and your partner (if applicable) feel informed and involved in any decisions that were made? Did you feel listened to?



"Yes, but in Labour did not look at birth plan. Kept saying I wasn't at the right stage to give birth but I was"

"I didn't feel listened to this time. Felt I was pushed into a c-section when all my other births were natural"

"No listened to but ignored- wanted to go to a birth center but told I couldn't due to my BMI after gave birth midwife said I could of given birth in birth center. It was disappointing"

How would you describe the support that you received?

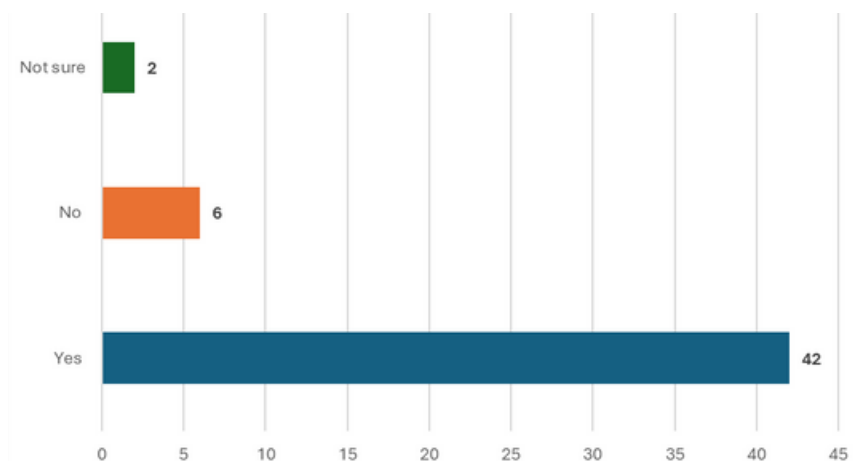
80% of people who responded to this question described the support that they received as positive. Most comments described the support as either good or excellent.

Other comments received were either mixed or negative. These included:

"Ok during but overlooked on the maternity ward. Postnatal I was discharged on the system before I left so couldn't get painkillers and no breastfeeding support. My husband was shouted at by staff"

"I felt like the support was good, the lack of support was when I had my baby I felt like I was left on my own. I would of liked a mum and baby group to attend where we could all discuss what we were going through and how we felt"

Were you offered a 6–8 week postnatal check by your GP?



Is there anything else you would like to share about your maternity and/or neonatal care experience?

"More breast feeding support needed"

"They are good but on one occasion there was nowhere to sit in the waiting room and long waiting times"

"I would of liked more information about antenatal classes and fitness classes for new mums - I only found out through my sister"

"Good care, feel like there is a need for baby and fitness class for new mum's"

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

In April 2025, seven women shared their personal experiences through one to one conversations with Healthwatch Lancashire about the care received from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals. At the time of these conversations all six women gave birth at Royal Preston Hospital within the last 12 months.

A summary of these experiences are listed below.

Pregnancy

Overall, experiences highlighted that people felt involved in decisions about their care, and felt listened to by midwives.

"The care plan was thorough and they talked me through everything well and always brought up about my concerns with fear around the blood condition."

"I felt very involved in all decisions made throughout my pregnancy, even when it was discussed that I would need to be induced in the hospital and not have a home birth, the staff explained why this had to happen and allowed me to ask any questions and share any concerns I had."

"I was on my own during my pregnancy with no partner or family to help me. I felt the hospital were very supportive and answered all my questions thoroughly. I had several midwives during my pregnancy and I felt they were all really supportive and explained the process to me well."

It was mentioned that the continuity of the same Midwife helped with feeling listened to and supported continuity of care received. One person reported difficulty when communicating with multiple Midwives.

"The only concern I had was I had multiple midwives which I found quite stressful, every time I met a new one I had to explain everything over again which I know wasn't their fault but I would have preferred one midwife who knew me and my medication throughout to save all that stress."

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

Birth

During conversations about their birthing experience, experiences were mixed. This was due to a reported lack of communication, and staff shortages.

"There was very little explanation about why they wouldn't transfer me [back to the birth centre], it was just decided for me and I was not listened to. I did ask for reasons why at the time but it wasn't very well communicated to me that I was in the best place"

"They had the temperature right up whilst I was in there it was like the amazon rainforest and there were people complaining about the heat to the staff, I heard them a few times."



"When we arrived there was a notice up about staff shortages and they told me that they weren't sure if I could have a water birth due to having shortages in staff. Of course this made me worry more as I had a full birth plan on how I wanted to give birth and who I wanted around me and to be told that they have staff shortages really didn't fill me with confidence going in".

Staff

Overall, people who shared their experiences reported staff members at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals to be helpful and polite.

"After a few months I did have one consistent midwife which was really nice for me and helped with communication, she was even there at my birth which I found really nice."

"I gave birth and the staff were great with me they really helped look after me and my daughter. They were good with my husband this time although they did have to ask him to leave the room near the end of the birth just whilst they checked on an issue, but they told him why they needed the room, they didn't just tell him to get out."

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

However, there were instances discussed where people didn't feel that they were listened to by staff members or judged for the personal decisions made, particularly around breastfeeding.

"The staff member took the baby and put her on me and said go on latch on to mum. I said I didn't want to breastfeed and the lady was really rude with me and said you need to breastfeed the baby needs milk and the quicker you do it the easier it will be. I explicitly said I didn't want to breastfeed and I wanted to bottle feed but I felt I was being judged by the staff for making that decision and not wanting to breastfeed."

"Staff need to listen to the mothers a bit more as I had a fight on my hands for pain medication with no understanding of what I was going through."

"I asked a few times what I needed to do, noone helped me or told me I had to wake my baby every few hours to feed her, it was like I was expected to know. But I am a first time mum how should I know. I just thought you let them sleep and when they wake up then you feed them. I did feel very judged by the staff on the ward about how I was as a mother and what I was doing which made me feel really uneasy."

Aftercare

We asked people about their experiences of accessing a 6-8 week postnatal check, responses to this were varied.

"I went for the 6-8 check with my GP at about 7 weeks but I felt they checked her but didn't make the effort to check on how I was or if I needed anything. This was a bit of a shame as I felt this could have been a better process to ensure that the mum is also alright after the birth."

"I was given my 6-8 check via the GP, they called me to book this in and I was able to attend during this time."

"The only thing I didn't have was the 6-8 week check with my doctors, they never contacted me and I completely forgot due to having the regular checks with the hospital after my birth so I just presumed this was taken over by the hospital"

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

In May 2025, ten women shared their personal experiences through one to one conversations with Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness and Healthwatch Lancashire about the care received from University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust.

To encourage people to provide feedback, Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness designed posters along with a QR code.



At the time of these conversations all ten women gave birth within the last 12 months, five births at Royal Lancaster Infirmary (RLI) and five births at South Lakes Birth Centre (SLBC).

A summary of these experiences are listed below.

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

Pregnancy

Whilst reviewing the experiences shared with Healthwatch, most people shared that they had either discussed a birthing plan or had one in place.

"I did get to discuss my birthing plan with the midwives, but it's difficult (especially with your first) as you don't know what to expect or what you should be thinking about. I didn't want to make it too limiting as I knew that anything could happen on the day and I wanted to be guided by the staff who are the experts." (RLI)

"The consultant told me I didn't need a birthing plan but one of the midwives connected me with a community midwife. We had an hours Zoom meeting where she talked through everything and helped me put one together, she was brilliant and really tried to make everything I wanted possible." (RLI)

"I planned to give birth in Helme Chase Kendal but once I had visited Lancaster four times due to fainting and sickness, my care was transferred to Lancaster. And it was decided I would birth at Lancaster. I was initially apprehensive about the transfer of care, but realised that I needed the best care for myself." (RLI)



University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

Birth

Overall, people expressed positive sentiment about their birth experiences. A number of people were moved to Lancaster in order to give birth.

"The night after the birth there were no beds for my husband so he had to go home, he could have stayed in the room and slept on a chair but that wouldn't have been comfortable. It would have been nice if he could have stayed but I understand." (RLI)

"I wanted to keep the baby's sex a surprise for the birth and everyone was really on board with this. The theatre team took a lot of photos and video of the delivery. I have a video of baby being lifted from her abdomen, this was special" (SLBC)

"The anesthetist was great and very calming. It was very busy but a good experience. They got my partner involved in the process. I have lots of photos of the birth, they even went back to my room to get my phone to take the photos." (SLBC)

"My experience was much better than three years previously with her first child because of the new triage centre at SLBC with a new triage midwife."

"I went into labour at the weekend and Helme Chase could not accommodate, so the choice was taken out of my hands and ended up at Lancaster."

Worth noting is two people made mention of the high temperatures in rooms at RLI, which felt uncomfortable to them.

"My only real complaint is that it was 27 degrees in my room and it was unbearable. At one point the staff brought my baby swaddled in blankets, woolly clothing and a hat, and I had to remove it all straight away to let them cool down. I fed this back to the staff whilst I was there."

"The only drawback was the heat in my room – it was 26 degrees and completely unbearable! I honestly think the heat affects breast feeding as I really struggled at first."

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

Staff

Feedback around staff members at both RLI and SLBC were mainly positive, highlighting staff members as caring and welcoming. Some people made mention of multiple midwives and changes in staff throughout their pregnancy.

"I had a midwife at RLI who I struggled with as they didn't seem very interested in me and I struggled to get in touch with them, but the rest were absolutely great." (RLI)

"The Neonatal staff were brilliant, I sent thank-you cards to both the Neonatal unit and the maternity team afterwards because they were all really caring and supportive." (RLI)

"They were wonderful, they welcomed us and showed us round. They were super, from the reception staff to the cleaners." (SLBC)

Aftercare

The majority of people who provided their experience were satisfied with the aftercare they received either from midwives, health visitors or via a 6-8 week postnatal check at their GP. Of note is mention of the referral process for the Traumatic Birth Team and the length of time this took.

"I'd also like to say that the health visitor has been brilliant too..... Looking after two babies at the same time is hard and I have really appreciated all the help that's been given." (RLI)

"I had really good care all the way through and the aftercare was very good too. I've had all my post-natal checks and beyond as the health visitor has visited more often than I expected which is lovely – you really feel like they care." (RLI)

"At 9 months the Health Visitor met with me and asked how I was mentally. I expressed dissatisfaction and bad feelings about my birth. The Health Visitor discussed this with at length and it was thought that I should be referred to the Traumatic Birth Team. This seemed quite a long time after the birth for this action to be taken." (RLI)

"My postnatal check took place at six weeks, there was not a lot of continuity in this care. My maternal check was tied up with my hypertension check. Because the GP was not a specialist they didn't have the same level of understanding as midwives."

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Interviews with Trusts

In order to monitor and celebrate any changes within the maternity and neonatal system over the last 12 months, both Healthwatch Blackpool and Healthwatch Lancashire held interviews with their local hospital Trusts.

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

To highlight recent developments in maternity services, Healthwatch Blackpool met with Holly Martinez, Maternity Matron at Blackpool Victoria Hospital, and commissioned a local artist to showcase the key elements of these changes. Illustration by Gee Collins.



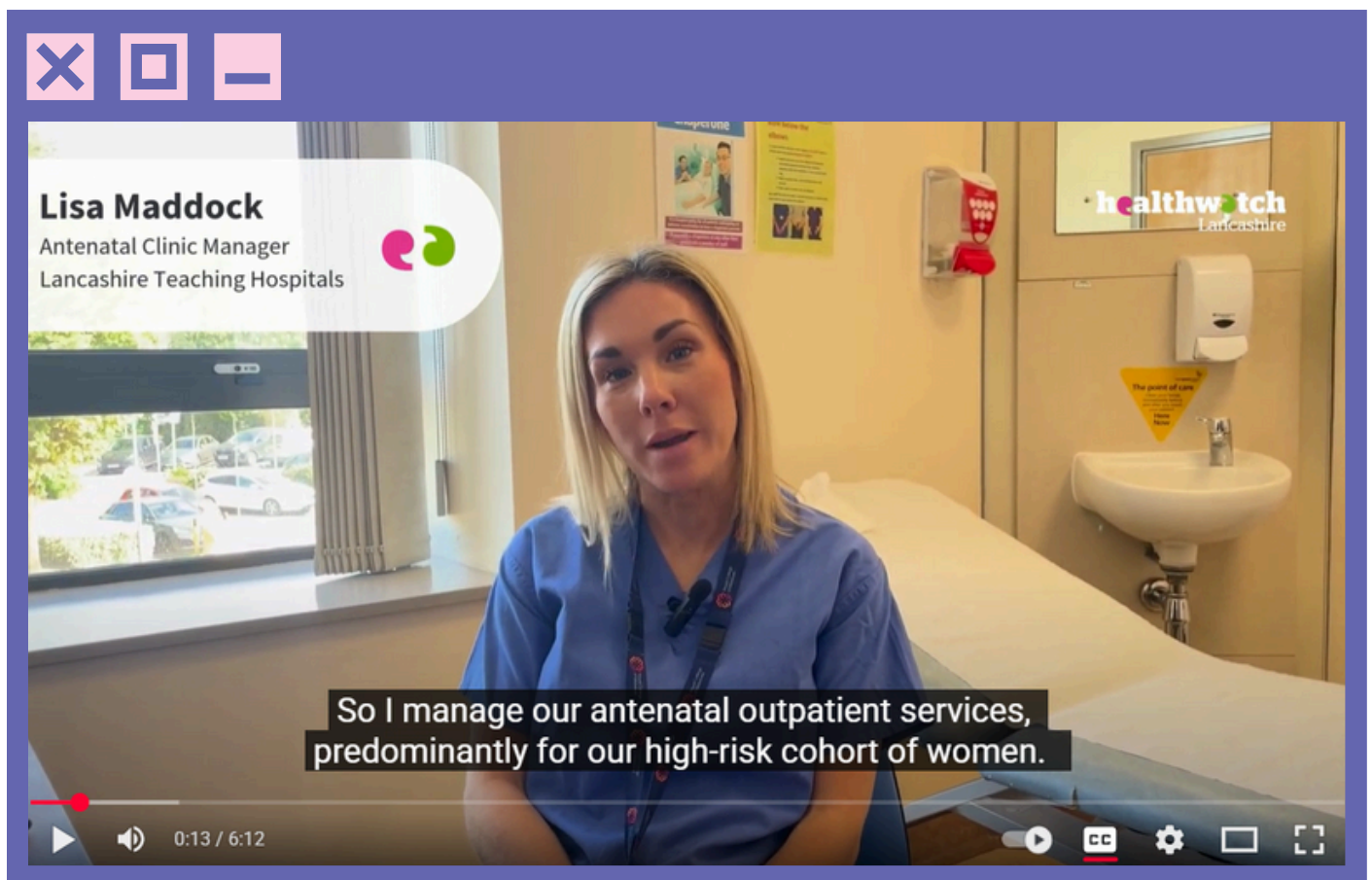
Illustration by Gee Collins

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

Lisa Maddock the Antenatal Clinic Manager at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals provided an insight into the last 12 months at their Trust.

Highlights included in the introduction of streamlines dating appointments for patients, which means that the Trust now books in these appointments for patients to ensure consistency and streamline the booking process.

Preston has now become a centre for the Maternal Medicine Network which is a huge achievement. The Trust has welcomed an epilepsy service and a specialist hypertension clinic for pregnant women.



Watch the full interview [here](#)

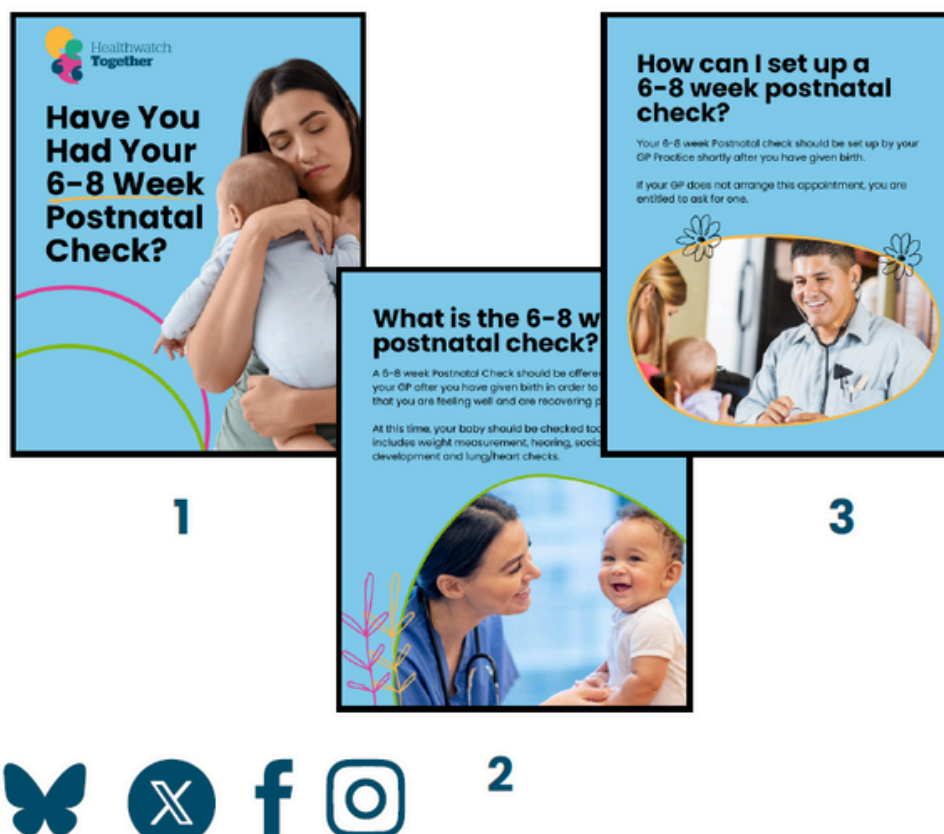
6-8 Week Postnatal Check Campaign

Following the roadshow in 2024, multiple recommendations were made both to the Hospital Trusts and the wider LMNS. A recommendation that was common across HWT was the importance of 6-8 week postnatal checks. The following recommendation was made:

Work with PCN's to promote the importance of 6-8 week postnatal checks for all babies and parents, including fathers and partners.

During the roadshow women and families told Healthwatch although a high proportion of people that had received their postnatal check, some had a negative experience due to the appointment not feeling personal and more of a 'tick-box' exercise. For those who had not received an appointment explained that it wasn't offered or they didn't receive any message to book it.

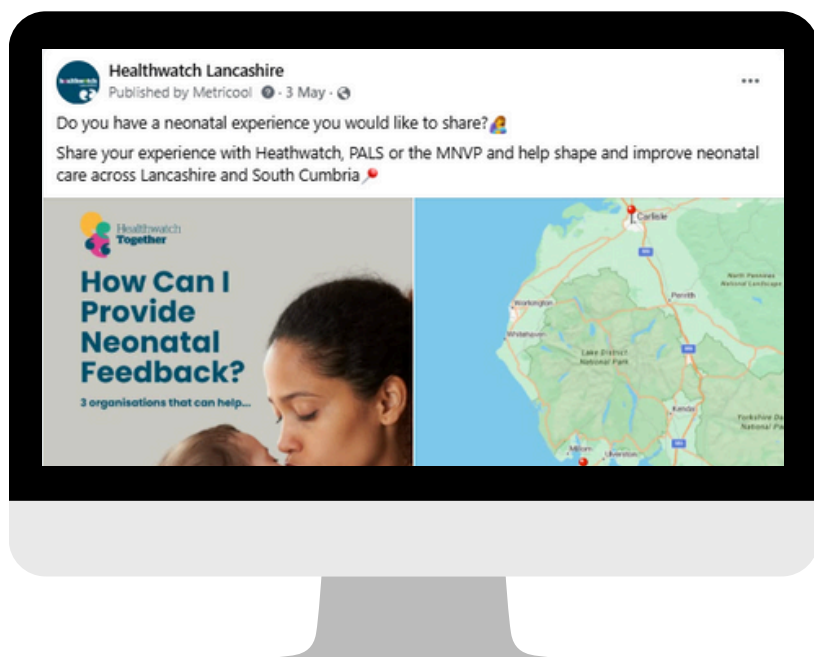
From that, it was decided that from this, HWT would produce a joint campaign to highlight the importance of postnatal checks, what to expect, how to book an appointment and how to provide feedback.



This campaign ran for the duration of a week and shared across Facebook and Instagram for each Healthwatch. Each day of the week had a different piece of information about 6–8 week postnatal checks.

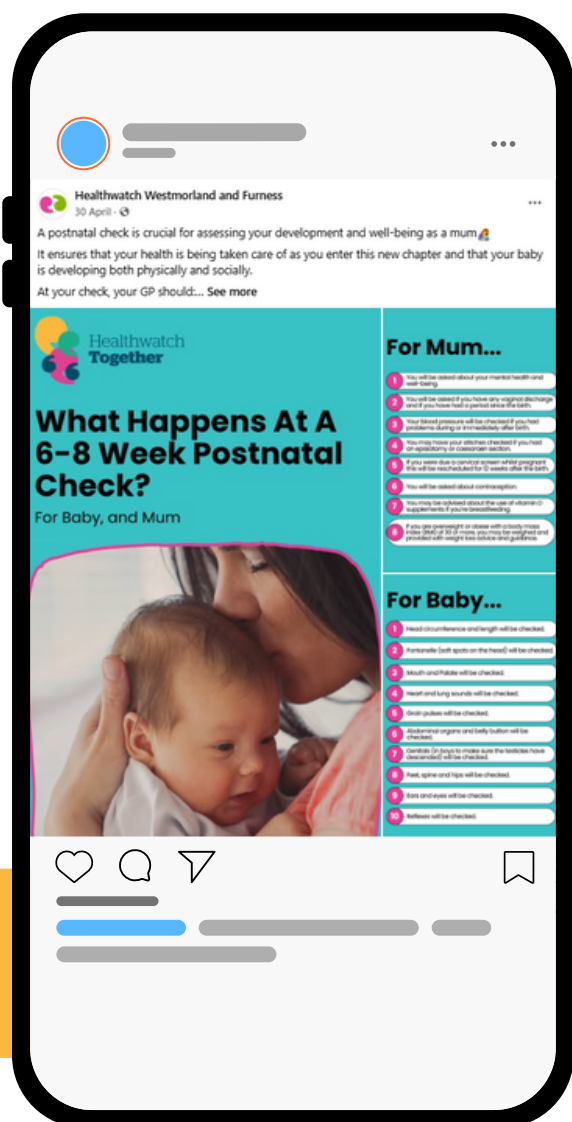
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Announce campaign & link to NHS website	Have you had your 6–8 week postnatal check?	What happens at your 6–8 week postnatal check?	Preparing for your 6–8 week postnatal check.	Promotion of the original HWT Maternity & Neonatal matters report	Where to share maternity and neonatal feedback

Through this campaign, we were able to help raise awareness of the importance of these checks, and encourage women and families to ensure they receive an appointment.



Read more about the 6–8 postnatal check here:

[Your 6-week postnatal check - NHS](#)



Appendix

Reports

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen

Maternity Services Final Report

Burnley General Antenatal Ward

Healthwatch Blackpool

Maternity Neonatal Matters One Year Review

Enter and View at Ward D: Blackpool Victoria Hospital – Healthwatch Blackpool

Enter and View at Fylde Coast Birth Centre – Healthwatch Blackpool

Healthwatch Lancashire

Enter and View Report Chorley Birth Centre

Enter and View Report Sharoe Green Antenatal Clinic Published

Enter and View report Preston Birth Centre

Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness

South Lakes Birthing Centre Enter and View Report

Helme Chase Enter and View Report

Westmorland General Outpatients Enter and View Report

Healthwatch Together Websites:

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen

Healthwatch Blackpool

Healthwatch Lancashire

Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness





Healthwatch
Together

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool,
Cumberland, Lancashire and Westmorland
and Furness working in partnership