



My Pregnancy During COVID19



*Report 1 29/4/20-
4/5/20*

The Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) is a forum for maternity service users, providers and commissioners of maternity services to come together to design services that meet the needs of local women, parents and families in the Morecambe Bay area.

This report contains feedback from their recent survey, which sought to obtain feedback from people in the area who are currently pregnant with a particular view on how their pregnancy has been affected by the current outbreak of COVID19.

Due to current restrictions, the survey has only been distributed online through social media and through the contacts of the Maternity Voices Partnership for Morecambe Bay.

*91 people took part in the survey.
Of these:*

- 22 were less than 20 weeks pregnant*
- 27 were between 20-30 weeks pregnant*
- 35 were between 30-40 weeks pregnant*
- 7 people were 40 weeks plus in their pregnancy.*

For approximately 50% of the respondents, this was their first pregnancy.

20% of the people who responded had experienced a traumatic pregnancy or birth in the past.

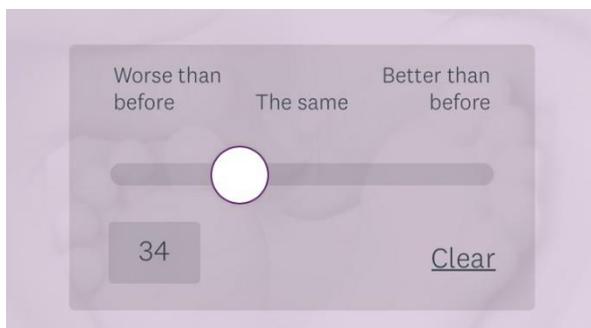
One person out of 91 told us that they don't feel safe at home during the lockdown, but did not explain further the reasons for this.

Out of the people surveyed, the chosen birth places were:

- 50 at Royal Lancaster Infirmary*
- 14 at South Lakes Birth Centre*
- 8 birthing at home*
- 5 at Helme Chase*
- 8 weren't yet decided*
- 6 were birthing outside of Morecambe Bay*

We asked people to rate on a continuum, how their mental health has been affected since the outbreak of COVID19.

The average response was 34, just slightly worse than they were feeling before.



We asked people to explain their response.

Many people felt the same or had found positive changes to their lives.

'I put the same but actually the virus has allowed me to spend more time with her family which is a positive. When we are working, we get 2 days a month together.'

'I am now working from home which has meant a reduction in travel and I can also rest when I need to, due to working flexibly.'

Many people felt their mental health was affected by anxieties around their birth and restrictions on their birth choices.

'Impact of not being able to have the birth as planned at helme chase and anxiety around covid-19 and having a newborn'

'Isolating therefore less support from work colleagues and family and friends. Uncertainty around conditions for giving birth, lack of choice of location of birth and how labour will be affected by covid 19. Fear of becoming ill or birth partner becoming ill prospect of labouring alone in hospital with no birth partner if he becomes ill.'

'Feel more anxious before appointments, felt teary when seeing health professionals in masks and gowns as it sort of hits home. How serious it all is.. Worried about my own health past 28 weeks pregnant, if I do happen to get covid 19.

Devastated that no one will be able to see the baby after it's born and how uncertain this makes everything.. Worry about how I will cope alone. And if maternity services are reduced how this will effect our care'

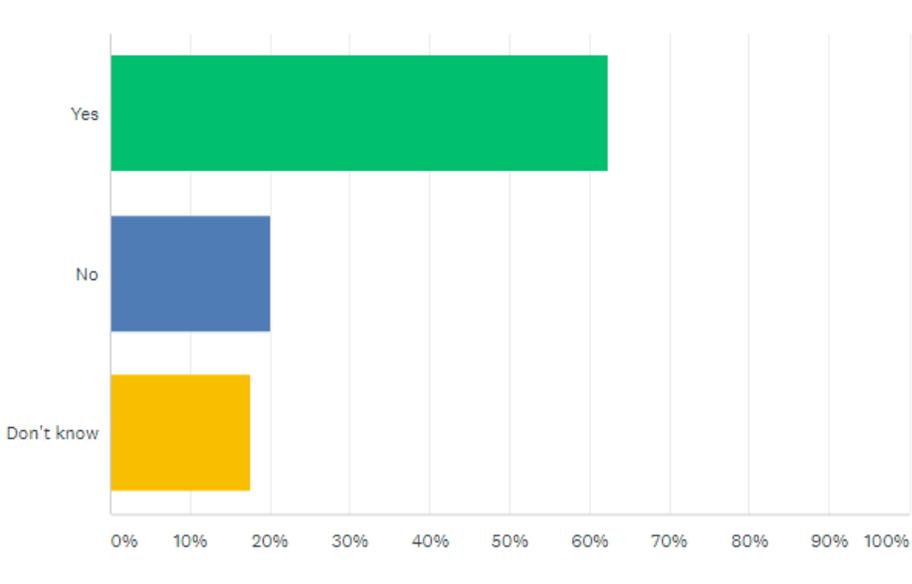
'I'm 29 weeks and I'm frightened to have any appointments. Therefore I haven't since my 20 week scan.'

There were also people who felt their mental health has been affected by being isolated from family and changes to their normal daily life.

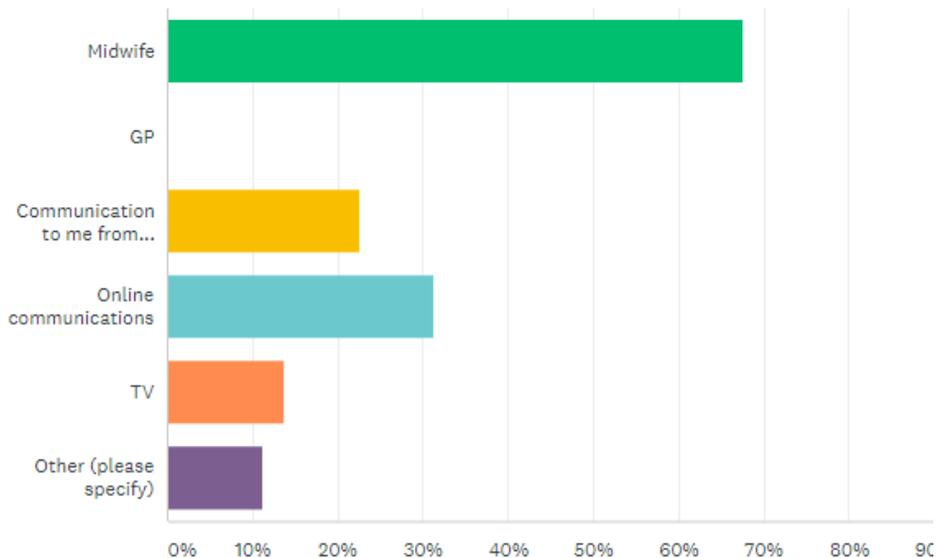
'It's not easy balancing bring pregnant, working full time from home and looking after a pre-schooler but just using breathing techniques and yoga to tackle stress'

Feeling really down as not getting to enjoy my pregnancy and experience all the things I thought I would. I feel really isolated as a first time mum with minimal support and was looking forward to meeting other mums and building a network.

We asked if people felt their maternity choices had been affected as a result of COVID19.

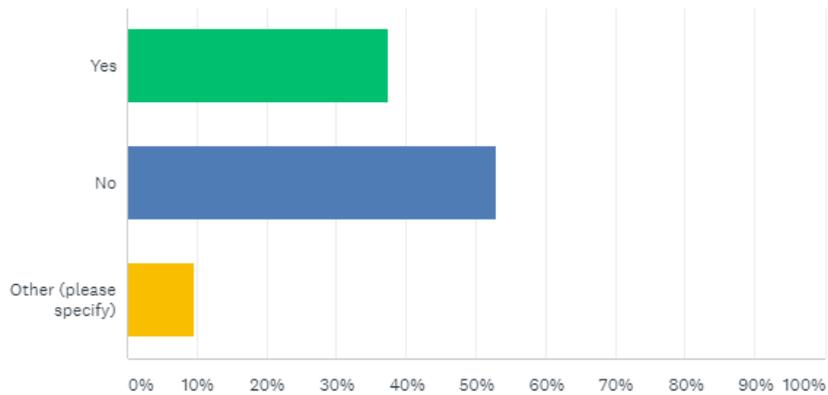


And how they had heard about these changes.



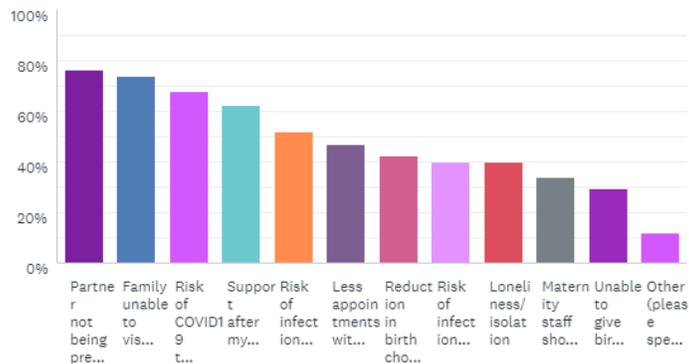
The 'other' sources reported were social media, friends, the maternity app, RCOG website and through online NCT courses.

We asked if the COVID19 restrictions had affected their birth plan, the respondents told us:



From the people who answered 'other' the main reason was because they hadn't thought about their birth plan yet.

We also asked the women, what their fears were about their pregnancy during the COVID19 outbreak, they told us...



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Partner not being present during ante-natal appointments	76.47% 65
Family unable to visit after birth	74.12% 63
Risk of COVID19 to my baby	68.24% 58
Support after my birth may be reduced	62.35% 53
Risk of infection during birth	51.76% 44
Less appointments with my midwife	47.06% 40
Reduction in birth choices	42.35% 36
Risk of infection during ante-natal appointments	40.00% 34
Loneliness/ isolation	40.00% 34
Maternity staff shortages	34.12% 29
Unable to give birth in desired location	29.41% 25
Other (please specify)	Responses 11.76% 10
Total Respondents: 85	

'I lost my mum at the end of last year, so my pregnancy has been mentally and emotionally challenging anyway. And my stress levels during the Covid19 outbreak have been sky high, particularly when I found out that I couldn't have a home birth or have my doula and my partner with me if therefore choosing to birth at SLBC. Two of my key choices have been removed. Plus, I'm still very much grieving for my mum. Having a doula was part of trying to deal with this - a familiar, strong, experienced older woman to support me through pregnancy, labour, birth and postpartum. I do know how to 'help myself' in this situation - my partner and I have also learnt hypnobirthing techniques and I practice daily relaxations/meditations. I'm a personal trainer and yoga teacher so I do look after myself well. I feel so disappointed that having taken full responsibility for my physical and mental/emotional wellbeing throughout my pregnancy, preparing for it appropriately, I won't be able to labour/birth as I would like to, unless I choose to free birth, which leaves me feeling pretty vulnerable. I feel that this NHS trust seemed to react very quickly by suspending home birth. I ask myself if ALL options have really been considered. Communication about the changes to maternity services hasn't been great either. This is no reflection on the midwifery staff - they're always fantastic - but for example there was some information that I only found out because I follow the relevant trust Facebook page! This is totally unacceptable. I feel extremely disappointed, and have had to deal with intense levels of stress, anxiety, grief, sadness and anger throughout this time.'

We asked what support the respondents would like to see, their responses fell into four main topics.

Allowing partners and Doula's to ante-natal appointments, to be in attendance in birth and provide support postnatally.

'Online pregnancy chats with other mothers to be of similar trimester. Online exercise and class options. Allowing partners to scans that could have bad news (normal antenatal apps not necessary) with rules in place like social distancing, wear a mask etc. Or optional video chat available so that the father can see and hear the same things and can be asked to join if there is bad news.'

'I'm incredibly anxious about receiving bad news at my scans, alone. I would prefer for there to be a way for my partner to be there, even if by video, to know I'm not facing it alone'

More information, communication and guidance from the Government, UHMBT, the maternity unit and from our own midwife.

'More information on changes provided 1st hand from midwives at appointments and updating health matters app in a timely manner including changes made by the Trust not only RCOG advice.'

'Information that is clear and from healthcare professionals in our area, specific to our area, about appointments, labour and what I should be doing to stay safe and how long for. Rather than from the media/via Chinese whispers!'

Post-natal support- people were worried that COVID19 isolation may mean they don't get the support they need from family, friends, maternity staff and other services. There were particular concerns regarding breastfeeding support.

'My midwives are still able to see me regularly due to my mental health and previous late loss in pregnancy.. I have been very lucky and they have been amazing. I think support in breast feeding would be good as I felt unable and unsupported in this last time. Possibly more follow ups after birth due to isolation'

'I would usually rely on the support of family to help with having a toddler and a newborn. This would be so I could catch up on sleep. Support with meals is useful too.'

Home births and births at Helme Chase beginning again.

'Having the option of a midwife present at my home birth.'

'To receive a home birthing kit if I give birth quick again like my 2 previous births'

Finally we asked how people were feeling, here is a snapshot of some of the responses.

‘Robbed of the joy of sharing the development of my pregnancy with others’

‘I’m feeling ok, just worry of the unknown’

‘Generally weepy and anxious’

‘Anxious, however midwives/hospital/gp have been absolutely fantastic’

‘Calm and content’

‘Scared, fed up, bored and worried about attending appointments’

‘Busy and tired with a toddler and no family help’

‘I don’t know how to plan ahead, with having a son at home and my parents are key workers’

‘Nervous, in the dark and isolated’

This survey will remain open and the next results analysed on the 11/05/20. If you would like any more information regarding this survey or the Bay-wide Maternity Voices Partnership, please contact baywidemvpchair@gmail.com