



Annual Report 2023



"Working together to improve maternity services"

Actions speak louder than words so this report concentrates on our priorities: why we are focusing on these areas, what we have done so far and what remains to be done.

Times are still tough for the NHS and Maternity Services are no exception but your MVP has been working hard in 2023 - bringing together staff and parents to support improvements based on what women, birthing people and their families told us about their maternity care.

Mathilde Peace, Lothian MVP lay chair



"We are keen to welcome new members to the MVP. If you have had a baby recently, work with or have an interest in maternity services and would like to support our improvement work, just email me directly."

Mathilde Peace, MVP Chair: mathilde.peace@nhs.scot

Find out more about what we do and how to get involved



NHS Lothian MVP

All our meetings continue to be held online. There is no doubt that it is convenient for new parents to attend the meetings from home and NHS staff also find it easier to fit the meetings around their schedule. However, being an active participant during an online meeting can be difficult so we have introduced pre-meetings specifically for lay members who have appreciated discussing the agenda or raising issues from their own experience in a smaller group.

SUPPORTING CHOICE

Why?

Shared decision making is a joint process in which a healthcare professional works together with a person to reach a decision about care.

It involves choosing tests and treatments based both on evidence and on the person's individual preferences, beliefs and values.

It makes sure the person understands the risks, benefits and possible consequences of different options through discussion and information sharing.

[NICE Guidelines](#)

What we did

The MVP designed a tool based on the well-known [BRAIN acronym](#) to support meaningful conversations about care and treatment options



However, feedback and complaints continue to show that women are not consistently supported to make their own decisions and not sufficiently involved in the decision-making process.

To help women communicate what they want for their labour and birth, the MVP and NHS Lothian are currently developing a new Personal Care Plan template and website resources.

About the new template for a Personal Care Plan for labour and birth

“This is absolutely perfect. I wish it was like this during my first pregnancy as the one I filled in was the old version and I don't think much attention was paid to it”. MVP lay member

Next steps

- Trial the proposed new template for a Personal Care Plan in labour and birth.
- Trial a separate card where women and birthing people are invited to write what they think is important their midwife should know about themselves, their previous pregnancies and births and how they want to be supported during labour.

INDUCTION OF LABOUR

Why?

An average of 28% of women had an induction of labour in 2023 in NHS Lothian, .

This figure has been steady for a few years and is not as high as the Scottish average of 35% but there are worrying trends:

- Increase of caesarean births following an induction from an average of 30% since 2020 to an average of 38% in 2023.
- Reduction of spontaneous vaginal births following an induction from an average of 52% to 44% in the same period.

Feedback to the MVP showed women were not sufficiently informed about the methods, process and the implications of being induced. They did not feel fully involved in the decision. There were issues with delays on admission and during the induction.

What we did

The MVP and NHS staff worked together to produce:

- A condensed information leaflet with a focus on personal choice and practical advice.
- A new section on the website with detailed information, help to make a decision, ways to have a positive birth with an induction FAQs and testimonies.

New website resources

The birth stories collected by the MVP in 2023 were turned into a training resource for maternity staff. The portfolio of stories and a series of posters can be used to review staff practice from the point of view of women and their partners.



Next Steps

NHS Maternity Services have a short-life working group which is currently considering:

- A dedicated team of maternity staff supporting induction from decision-making to admission and throughout the process.
- A dedicated clinical space in hospital.
- An online group session with a midwife to discuss induction and options.

TONGUE-TIE

Why?

Breastfeeding mothers have been raising a number of issues in relation to tongue-tie:

- Difficulty accessing support in a timely manner.
- Inadequate process for referral for assessment and diagnosis.
- Inconsistency of diagnosis.
- Unacceptable delays when referred to ENT services for tongue-tie division procedure.

A number of mothers described the extreme distress this causes, the damaging impact on their relationship with their baby and general wellbeing & mental health.

What we did

The MVP encouraged parents to send their feedback to NHS Lothian Patient Experience Team and demonstrated the need for urgent improvement.

The main difficulty in addressing the issues is that several separate services are involved and need to coordinate their response.

In 2022 NHS Lothian set up a cross-service review. Disappointingly, this review stalled in 2023 due to service pressures and personnel changes. A new lead was appointed at the start of 2024 and it is hoped that the group will reconvene and make some progress.

The MVP acknowledges that this issue is not specific to NHS Lothian and that specialist opinion differs as to what approach and treatment is best.

Key Facts

Tongue-tie can affect both breastfeeding and bottle-feeding. For some babies, the effects will be quite mild. For others, tongue-tie can make feeding extremely challenging or even impossible.

Next steps

Report on progress made by the cross-service review group.

Propose that lay representation should be invited to participate in this improvement work at an appropriate stage.

GIVING A VOICE TO ALL WOMEN AND BIRTHING PEOPLE

Why?

Maternity Voices Partnership groups exist to give a voice to all women and birthing people living in their Health Board area so that everybody can be heard and actively influence service improvements and change.

The 2023 survey of NHS Lothian MVP demographics shows that our MVP is not sufficiently representative of the diversity of the local population and that some groups are particularly under-represented.

What we did

The MVP was able to obtain funding by partnering for two distinct initiatives with the University of Edinburgh Pregnancy Research Team and the local charity KWISA which supports the local African & Caribbean population. The MVP set up a working group to develop strategies to offer every parent the opportunity to engage with their local maternity services.

It soon became apparent that we needed to have different strategies for different populations:

- Online-based MVP advertising to target new parents.
- In-person visits by the Chair to established support groups run by local charities to engage with parents new to Scotland.
- Community events in partnership with an established local charity - [KWISA](#) - to engage with women and families of African & Caribbean heritage.

[Updates on our progress and what we have heard so far.](#)

Key Figures

- The online campaign helped recruit 12 new members to the MVP.
- Around 20 women newly arrived in Scotland shared their maternity care experience with the Chair over 10 visits to support groups facilitated by the [Multi-Cultural Family Base charity](#).
- The community events supported by KWISA were attended by a cumulative total of 120 women.

Next Steps

In 2024 the MVP will:

- Trial an online recruitment campaign targeted at specific groups and locations.
- Build on the partnership with charities to turn feedback into improvement plans and implement change.
- Start a new initiative in partnership with [LGBT+ Health and Wellbeing](#) charity.

NHS Lothian

MATERNITY SERVICES WEBSITE

Why?

NHS Lothian Maternity Services website must provide up-to-date information that is specific to the services provided locally.

Benefits of a website:

- The contents can be updated quickly.
- The Google translation functionality allows each page to be translated in a choice of languages.
- Reduction in number and cost of patient information leaflets.

What we did

Improved and new content includes:

Where can I have my baby in Lothian?
Dads, co-parents and partners

Breech baby and ECV
Induction of labour
Signs of an early birth and advice for parents
Your pain relief options in Lothian

Your mental health & wellbeing
Local charities and organisations supporting parents

Care at home after the birth
The few weeks with baby

Support for bereaved parents

Check it out

[NHS Lothian Maternity Services](#)



Next Steps

All suggestions are welcome. We are currently developing the following pages:

My personal care plan for labour and birth
Homebirth
Pelvic Girdle Pain
Types of birth
About NHS maternity staff

SOCIAL MEDIA

Why?

NHS Lothian Maternity Services ran a Facebook page very successfully for a year rotating editorial responsibility around the services and midwifery teams.

Regrettably, 18 months ago, Google, quoting a number of reasons, closed the page.

The absence of a social media presence is extremely detrimental to NHS Lothian maternity services who find themselves without an essential communication tool and are cut off from their service users' main access to information.

What we did

The MVP Chair has been raising this issue numerous times over the past year and a meeting was finally arranged with the Communications Officer who runs the social media platforms for the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People.

The Communications Officer suggested a way forward and a plan of action. An Instagram account was recommended.

Sadly, no-one in maternity services has been identified yet to take this forward.

Key Points

Most maternity services in NHS Scotland have a social media presence and use this to effectively engage with the local population.

Next Steps

The MVP is urging NHS Lothian Maternity Services to adopt the suggested plan of action and identify a lead to take this forward.

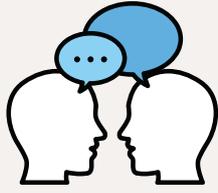
An editorial rota should be agreed so that maternity staff can start preparing material in anticipation of the launch of a new social media platform.



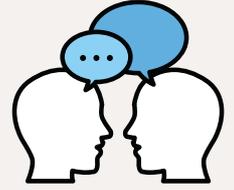
Please, tell us what you think about our work

Do you agree with our priorities?

Are there other areas of maternity care you would like the MVP to help improve?



We are listening!



A word from Mercedes Perez-Botella, NHS Lothian Director of Midwifery and MVP vice-chair.

“Childbirth is a transformative experience both physically and emotionally and we are at the centre of it. We support families to have the best start, preparing them not only for the process of childbearing and birth but also to become the best possible parents and supporting them to develop environments where their babies can thrive into healthy adults.”



All the MVP lay members are volunteers and give generously of their time and energy to make sure the local population receives the best maternity care .

Mathilde Peace, Lay Chair, was nominated for the NHS Lothian Voluntary Service Award and made it to the final three!

“Although I did not win, I am particularly pleased that this nomination contributed to highlight the indispensable work that the Maternity Voices Partnership does. I think it was a lovely way to recognise the commitment and dedication of each one of the MVP members.”

Mathilde Peace



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Maternity Voices
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