

Survey of new mothers highlights improvements

December 16 2015, by Corrinne Gallagher

The state of maternity care in Scotland has been examined by University of Stirling researchers working with the Scottish Government.

The national report *Having a baby in Scotland 2015: Listening to Mothers* documents the story of more than 2000 new mothers.

Produced in partnership by the Scottish Government and Stirling's Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit (NMAHP RU) – it shows [women](#) are accessing care earlier in pregnancy with significantly more contacting a midwife first when they are pregnant.

Communication between women and [maternity care](#) staff appears to be good with most women reporting that they were listened to, spoken to in ways that they could understand and involved as much as they wanted in decisions about their care. The high level of trust women had in staff was evident, in particular during labour and birth.

Areas where care could be improved - particularly in relation to [mental health](#) - were highlighted, based on women's responses to the survey.

Around one third of women felt that they were not given all the advice they needed about emotional changes they might experience and around one quarter were not given information about who to contact for advice about emotional changes if they needed it.

Additionally 44 percent of women said they did not get enough information to help them decide where to have their baby and 24 percent said they were not offered a choice about where to have their baby.

Report author Helen Cheyne, midwife and Professor of Midwifery Research in the NMAHP Research Unit at the University of Stirling said: "One of the most striking findings was around women's mental health in the six weeks following birth. A recent report shows that almost a quarter of women who died between six weeks and one year following birth did so from mental health related causes. It is essential that all women and their families know the signs and symptoms of mental health problems following birth and who to contact if these occur.

"The report recommends that NHS Boards should examine whether local maternity and perinatal mental health services meet current best practice recommendations to support maternal mental health. All midwives, health visitors and medical staff caring for pregnant and postnatal women should undertake recognised training to ensure there is support for mothers who experience [mental health problems](#)."

The report from the NMAHP Research Unit concludes with six recommendations including the appointment of post-natal care champions in every maternity hospital, ensuring one to one care of women by skilled midwives throughout labour and birth remains a priority and that all women should have choices about where their antenatal and postnatal care and place of birth happens.

Provided by University of Stirling

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