

Enter and View Visit to:

**The Yorkshire and
Humber Mother and
Baby Unit** (based at The Mount, Leeds)
5th March 2019

**Your independent watchdog ensuring people's
voice are at the heart of shaping health and care
services in Leeds**

Background

In 2016 Healthwatch England started a project to find out about people's experiences of using mental health services. The aim of this work was to help inform mental health policy and practice by creating a strong evidence base about people's experiences of mental health care at different stages of life. Over 34 000 people shared their views and experiences of using mental health services with Healthwatch England. More information about the project and the report is available on the Healthwatch England website at <https://bit.ly/2uqkhoa>.

Following the information gathered by Healthwatch England four main areas of mental health were highlighted as those that people most frequently talked about. These included primary care, crisis care, community treatment and children and young people's services. Healthwatch England decided to look at all these areas in more detail and started with the mental health support available to people planning on having a child, who are pregnant or new parents.

Healthwatch Leeds was one of 5 local Healthwatch who were selected to work in partnership with Healthwatch England to get the views of new and expectant parents through a range of methods. These included an online survey, focus groups and a visit to The Yorkshire and Humber Mother and Baby Unit based at the Mount Hospital in Leeds. Healthwatch England will produce a full report of the findings from all 5 Healthwatch taking part in this project.

The Yorkshire and Humber Mother and Baby Unit provides an inpatient environment where mothers experiencing severe mental health difficulties can receive treatment and support while continuing to care for their baby. The Mother and Baby Unit is a small (8 bedded), safe friendly unit with specialist staff who work to enable mothers to recover from difficulties and return home with appropriate support.

What we did

Two members of the Healthwatch staff team carried out a 2 hour enter and view visit to the mother and baby unit at the Mount. The visit was a combination of observations and one to one conversations with women using the Healthwatch England Survey.

On the day of our visit the unit was full. However 2 of the women were out and there were 6 available to speak to. Out of those one was very unwell and 2 were not able to speak to us. We carried out a total of 3 surveys with women on the day and left some surveys and freepost envelopes for others to complete and return to us.

What we found

Environment

We walked around the unit and the communal areas and were shown one of the bedrooms. We logged our findings on observation sheets

The unit was clean and tidy and the communal areas were spacious and welcoming. There were a couple of lounges and a conservatory area with a range of toys and books for the children. We were also shown a sensory room which was set up for an activity. The bedroom we were shown was spacious and tidy and residents were able to bring items from home to have in their rooms.

Mental Health Problems

We asked the women about their mental health problems and when these had started.

All the women we spoke to had a diagnosed mental health condition. For one of them she had experienced mental health problems from an early age and well before her pregnancy. Another told us her mental health problems had started during pregnancy and for one it had started after the birth of her first child and now again with her second child.

Mental Health Support

We asked the women to tell us about the support that they had received for their mental health issues

Two of the 3 women we spoke to said they had received support when they had needed it and it had been easy to get this support. However, the remaining one told us that she did not feel she had got the support when she needed it and it had been difficult and challenging to get any support.

All those that we spoke to rated the support that they had received from professionals such as their GP, health visitor and other health professionals as good or very good.

All the women we talked to spoke very highly of the care and support that they had received from the staff at the mother and baby unit, even though for one it had been a battle to get the support needed.

"I can't believe how long it has taken me to get this sort of support, I've had to battle hard for it".

"I get on well with certain staff, I've formed relationships. I feel that they are available to talk when I needed it.

"I wouldn't be here without the Mount".

Involvement in care

We asked the women if they had care plans and if they felt involved in decisions about their care

Out of the women that we spoke to only one said she had a care plan and the other two told us that they weren't sure if they did. They all mentioned meetings and reviews where their care was discussed. Two of the three felt involved in decisions about their care, however they did comment that sometimes that involvement was limited by what could be provided. One did not feel involved and commented that she felt her concerns about the medication she was on were not being listened to. She also commented about not always being kept updated on when she had an appointment and only being told at the last minute.

"I am involved in making decisions, but I feel a bit backed into a corner sometimes."

"I want to feel more involved with decisions about my meds"

Other Comments

We asked the women if they had any further comments to make about the care and support they had received for their mental health problems

We received a range of further comments. One respondent told us about the excellent support she had received from her GP which had then led to her getting the help she needed at the right time.

There were concerns and anxiety expressed about communication and understanding of their issues and problems and what the long term outlook would be. Some issues were also raised about minor requests for things not being dealt with making it difficult to ask again and leading to increased anxiety. One person also mentioned wanting more variety in the activities, especially more activities such as yoga and Pilates.

Another talked about the lack of support for her mental health problems which had started when she was very young. She believed the lack of support at that time had led to the problems she suffered with her mental health during pregnancy. She had finally managed to get support from the mother and baby unit but as she was out of the area she was far away from her family and friends.

Another respondent told us about the difference in the support she had received after her first pregnancy and this time. Her mental health problems had started after the birth of her first child and she felt that she had not received much support at that time. However, it was much later that there was a recognition of the severity of her condition. She commented that as a result of that there was a lot more support available to her during and after this pregnancy and she had received the support that she needed when she needed it.

Our messages / recommendations

Overall the women we spoke to had received good care and support for their mental health problems, from a range of professionals such as GP's and from staff at the mother and baby unit.

While there were high levels of satisfaction with the care received there had been challenges for some in getting that support and some variations in the support during different pregnancies.

Other challenges were around involvement in decision making and better communication about appointments, medication and an understanding of their mental health problems.

Based on our findings there were high levels of satisfaction with the care and support that women received at the Mount. We would make the following suggestions to further build on the care provided and make the experience at the Mount even more of a positive one for all:

- Ensure all patients are aware that they have a care plan and know what is in the care plan.
- Communicate in an effective manner with patients so they are kept informed about their condition.
- Keep involving all patients in decisions about them and when the options are limited make sure the reasons for this are clearly explained.
- Review communication procedures so that all patients know in advance when and where they have appointments
- If not already in place have a system where patients can make suggestions for activities that they may want

Service Provider Response

The following feedback was received from the acting ward manager and clinical team manager:

There is a weekly forum 'community meeting' where mothers discuss what groups & activities they would like to participate in that week and provide feedback on their experience at the unit. It could be the mothers who provided feedback had been on leave and not been able to attend.

We will share the report with the team and feedback the comments about communication.

Next Steps

The report will be shared with the service providers and commissioners. We will agree with them the next steps to be taken in response to our recommendations/suggestions and work with them to ensure any agreed actions are followed through and implemented. We will also share the report with Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission.

The report will also be published on the Healthwatch Leeds website.

Thank you

This report has been written by Sharanjit Boughan - Community Project Worker at Healthwatch Leeds.

We would like to thank the clinical team manager and acting ward manager for their help in organising this visit and the information shared with us and the warm welcome on the day of the visit. We would also like to thank the patients on the ward for taking the time to speak with us on the day of our visit.