

Channelling women's experiences of their maternity care into better maternity services in Ireland: Operationalising the National Maternity Experience Survey

Background

In Ireland, national health policy highlights the importance of engaging with people who use health and social care services and capturing their care experiences to improve care.

Aim

The aim of the National Maternity Experience Survey (NMES) is to learn from the experiences of women to improve maternity care and inform policy and regulation activities.

This poster outlines the steps involved in operationalising the NMES as a tool for understanding maternity experiences and informing efforts to improve maternity care.



Methods

1. A partnership between the HSE, HIQA and the Department of Health to develop and implement the NMES and act on its findings was established. This partnership is the National Care Experience Programme.
2. A survey tool was developed in conjunction with National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) researchers, based on systematic reviews of comparable international maternity care survey programmes, and engagement with stakeholders of the Irish maternity services.
3. A review of international maternity surveys was undertaken to ascertain operational best practice.
4. Extensive engagement was undertaken with maternity care providers to agree an approach to the sharing of women's contact information.

Results

The survey instrument and process for conducting the first National Maternity Experience Survey were developed. The survey contains 68 questions which capture the whole pathway of maternity care from antenatal care, through labour and birth, to postnatal care in the community.

The survey is available at:
<https://yourexperience.ie/maternity/about-the-survey>



Conducting the National Maternity Experience Survey

Survey design:

- A cross-sectional retrospective survey.

Eligibility:

- Women aged 16 or over who gave birth in October, and in some cases November, 2019 with a postal address in Ireland. Please see Table 1.

Table 1: Eligibility for the National Maternity Experience Survey 2020

Maternity Services Provider	Mothers of babies born in October 2019	Mothers of babies born in November 2019
National Maternity Hospital	*	*
Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital	*	*
Rotunda Hospital	*	*
Cork University Maternity Hospital	*	*
University Maternity Hospital Limerick	*	*
Our Lady of Lourdes Drogheda	*	*
University Hospital Galway	*	*
Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar	*	*
Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise	*	*
University Hospital Waterford	*	*
Wexford General Hospital	*	*
Latterkeny University Hospital	*	*
Portluncula University Hospital	*	*
St Luke's General Hospital	*	*
Cavan General Hospital	*	*
Mayo University Hospital	*	*
University Hospital Kerry	*	*
Sligo University Hospital	*	*
South Tipperary General Hospital	*	*
National home births services	*	*

Sharing of women's contact information:

- A Data Protection Impact Assessment was undertaken to evaluate the implications of the NMES on data subjects' privacy rights and to inform the development of security and data protection processes.
- Data Processing Agreements, which are legally-binding, were implemented between HIQA and maternity service providers to define the scope, purpose, roles and responsibilities of sharing information.
- Hospitals and the HSE National Home Birth Services provided the contact details of eligible women.

Data Protection:

- The legal basis for processing personal data in the NMES is set out in the public interest clauses of the GDPR* and the Data Protection Act 2018.†
- Participation in the survey is voluntary and there are five opt-out methods.

Mode of contact:

- Postal invitation

Timing of contact:

- Three - four months after the birth of the baby

Mode of response:

- Online
- Paper/post

Survey Period

- 4 February – 30 April 2020

Survey outputs:

- A national report on women's experiences of their maternity care
- Hospital and county-level reports
- Quality improvement plans for each maternity unit/hospital and county
- Tableau, the online interactive reporting tool, available to all
- Online dashboard available to maternity service providers

* General Data Protection Regulation Article 6(e) and Article 9(2)(i)

† Section 38 and Section 53

Next Steps

The findings of the first NMES will be published in September 2020. Concurrently, the HSE will publish its quality improvement plans based on the findings.

The HSE, HIQA and the Department of Health have each committed to using the findings to generate quality improvements and to inform policy development and implementation in Irish maternity services.

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