



Review of Processes for the 2025 National Maternity Experience Survey

About the National Care Experience Programme

The National Care Experience Programme (NCEP) seeks to improve the quality of health and social care services in Ireland by asking people about their experiences of care and acting on their feedback. The National Care Experience Programme is a joint initiative by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department of Health and patient and or service-user partners.

The NCEP undertakes surveys in a range of care areas, seeking to capture the experiences of people using services and publish the results. Surveys are designed to capture people's experiences across both community and a variety of acute settings and to provide a holistic understanding of people using these services. The NCEP gathers feedback at each stage of the care journey from the community to hospital admission and post discharge to better understand the continuity of care from the perspective of people using these services. This approach also allows for targeted improvements in communication, coordination, and overall care by identifying gaps or inefficiencies that exist in the transition between settings. A comprehensive survey strategy ensures that people's experiences are captured, enhancing both quality of care and service user experience, in diverse healthcare environments.

The NCEP operates the following surveys:

- National Inpatient Experience Survey
- National Maternity Experience Survey
- National Nursing Home Experience Survey
- National Maternity Bereavement Experience Survey
- National End of Life Survey
- National Mental Health Experience Survey (in development)
- National Cancer Care Experience Survey (in development).

Each survey aims to learn from peoples' feedback to identify what is working well and what needs to be improved when it comes to care in health and social services. The findings are published to support and enable sustained improvements in overall care experiences. The NCEP Research and Analysis team publishes survey findings and data, engages in academic research, and develops educational material to help people understand care experience surveys. All NCEP publications and academic papers are published [here](#).

Find out more about the NCEP at www.yourexperience.ie.

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1. Background information

The National Maternity Experience Survey offers eligible women who have recently given birth the opportunity to share their experiences of Ireland's maternity services — from antenatal to postnatal care — in order to improve the safety and quality of care provided to women and their babies.

The second National Maternity Experience Survey took place in 2025. Women who gave birth in February or March 2025 received an invitation to take part in the survey three months after the birth of their baby.

1.1 Why are process reviews conducted?

The National Care Experience Programme is committed to continuously improving care in Ireland and therefore conducts a review of processes after each survey cycle. During these reviews, key stakeholders identify which processes work well, and which processes are in need of improvement, through a targeted consultation.

The National Care Experience Programme will utilise the findings from the review of processes to improve the planning and implementation of future survey cycles, by repeating processes that received positive feedback, and developing areas that were identified as needing improvement. Stakeholder feedback from reviews of processes of previous surveys has been used to inform survey promotion strategies, reporting of findings, and potential stakeholder training for survey implementation.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to give an overview of the feedback received from stakeholders in the review of processes regarding the planning, implementation, and outputs of the National Maternity Experience Survey 2025. This document provides an overview of the evaluation process and recommendations for the administration of future survey cycles.

3. Scope

This document will review participants' feedback on the implementation and administration of the National Maternity Experience Survey 2025, including:

- stakeholder engagement and communication around the survey
- survey processes and methodology
- survey questionnaire
- adoption of the online dashboard.

4. Evaluation process

An invitation to participate in the evaluation questionnaire was distributed by email to all key stakeholders. This included staff and management from participating services, partner organisations, regional and national HSE staff, advocacy groups and other representative bodies.

In total, 36 people responded to the evaluation questionnaire. The majority of responses (83%) were from those working in participating hospitals and of those who provided information on their roles:

- 31% were Directors of Midwifery/Nursing or Clinical Nurse Managers
- 22% worked in Quality and Patient Safety
- 16% were other staff (including General Practitioners)
- 12% were Nursing or Midwifery staff
- 12% worked in Hospital General Management or Administration
- 6% were Patient Advocacy and Liaison staff.

The evaluation questionnaire can be found in **Appendix 1**.

5. Overview of the responses received

5.1 Communication and engagement

Promotional materials, including posters and frequently asked questions leaflets, were distributed to participating hospitals to promote awareness about the survey. The survey team also communicated directly with participating hospitals, and other stakeholders over the course of the survey cycle, through online information sessions, email/phone contact, and training on the online dashboard.

Stakeholders who took part in the review of processes shared their feedback on the aspects of communication that worked well and also provided suggestions for improvement.

'Posters and leaflets were helpful when informing service users about the survey.'

'More coverage is needed in national media to raise awareness with the public'

Key findings and suggestions for future survey communications included:

- In general, respondents explained that communication resources and promotional material, such as posters and leaflets, had been helpful when informing women about the survey, and that the visuals used across material to promote the survey had been well received. However, there were some suggestions to increase the quantity of promotional materials provided to participating services to ensure distribution to eligible participants.
- Respondents generally felt supported and well-briefed by the survey team before and during the survey period, noting that information was easily accessible, and that the relevant training provided had been useful.
- A somewhat reduced level of advertising of the survey was noted, compared to previous surveys within the National Care Experience Programme. Many respondents highlighted the importance of promoting the survey in hospitals and in the public domain, such as on social media, to maximise survey participation.
- It was suggested that consideration is given to identifying a designated person in each participating service to ensure all eligible participants are made aware of the upcoming survey before leaving hospital. The intention would be to maximise response rates and to inform eligible persons of the importance of their participation and their feedback for improving future care experiences.
- To maximise future survey participation, it was suggested to liaise with relevant stakeholder groups to inform them of plans for upcoming surveys so that clashes with other national surveys might be avoided. The importance was also emphasised of ensuring that participants are aware of, and encouraged to take part in, national surveys of this type, as confusion may be caused when they happen to be run concurrently with routine local service improvement feedback surveys administered through maternity hospitals and units.

5.2 Questionnaire

The 2025 National Maternity Experience Survey includes 64 structured, tick-box questions and three open-ended (free-flow) questions. The survey covers the full pathway of maternity care — from antenatal care, through labour and birth, to postnatal care in the community. The survey was available in English, Irish, Polish and Romanian.

'I would suggest changes to questionnaire with more input from clinicians in developing specific questions.'

'... some of questions very generic and difficult to develop Quality Improvements based on responses provided.'

Key findings and suggestions for the next iteration of the questionnaire included:

- Consider capturing information to understand the experiences of women with specific medical issues (such as gestational diabetes, hypertension and pre-eclampsia) and reflect this perspective on the dashboard
- Include a question on vaccinations (flu, pertussis, COVID-19) during the maternity care experience
- Consider expanding response options in relation to breastfeeding and infant feeding support to capture services such as community lactation consultants and the online lactation consultant service (live chat and email)
- Explore disaggregation of responses relating to various care providers in the community (for example, General Practitioners and Public Health Nurses) and more specific information on the role of General Practitioners
- Consider reviewing the length of the survey to ensure it is not negatively affecting completion rates
- Seek more input from clinicians when developing specific questions on the questionnaire
- Consider the content of the questionnaire as some questions are very generic and difficult to develop QI on based on responses provided.

5.3 Survey administration

All eligible participants were contacted by text message in May and June 2025 to invite them to take part in the survey¹. The text message contained a link to the online questionnaire. Participants were also informed that they could call the survey helpline to request a paper version of the survey questionnaire. Two reminder text messages were sent to those who were invited to participate, but had not yet completed the survey.

'Text message invite seems to work really well.'

'I would just worry that the survey population might have thought it was a scam.'

Key findings and suggestions for future survey administration included:

- Overall, the change to a more digital survey methodology was welcomed and feedback was generally positive. However, some respondents felt the use of an online link may have led to a reduced participation rate and that a letter would have helped maximise response rates.
- It was noted that the majority of participants were White Irish and there was a limited response rate from ethnic minorities; it was suggested that focus groups could be considered to explore the accessibility of the survey.
- Consider extending sample period to three months to enable greater participation and insights from smaller maternity units.
- Promote the option to request a paper copy, for example, in the text message invite or reminder communications.
- Shorten the timeframe between text message reminders to maximise engagement and participation in the survey.

¹ In the previous iteration of the National Maternity Experience Survey conducted in 2020, the survey was administered by post with the option to respond online or through a hardcopy questionnaire.

5.4 Online dashboard

The National Care Experience Programme provided nominated stakeholders with access to a secure online dashboard, enabling them to view and survey responses for their service.

'Excellent to be able to view the qualitative data and the quantitative and the Region and National benchmark was very beneficial.'

'Filtering comments is not that easy.'

Key findings and suggestions for the dashboard included:

- Respondents commented positively on the layout and ease of navigation of the dashboard along with the level of consultation and training undertaken by the team as part of the development and roll-out of the new dashboard
- The level of detail available on the dashboard and the ability to drill down into specific information was noted as very useful
- The ability to view results at a regional level and benchmark against the national is very beneficial
- Respondents commented on the qualitative data element of the dashboard, noting the inclusion of such data brings 'realism' to the results
- The new drop-down menu on the dashboard which displays sources of breastfeeding support is helpful
- While the dashboard is useful, there are some restrictions on functionality and it can be difficult to navigate to extract specific information
- The filtering of comments is not very user-friendly and suggestions were shared to enhance the display of qualitative data on the dashboard
- The ability to export specific questions and to carry and automatically apply filters across sections or pages on the dashboard would be welcome
- The process of obtaining access and getting set up on the dashboard initially was quite slow and complicated
- Disaggregation of responses relating to various care providers in the community (such as General Practitioners and Public Health Nurses) would be useful.

6. Conclusion

- While promotional material is seen as very useful, communications should be increased where possible to promote awareness of and participation in the National Maternity Experience Survey.
- Consider reviewing the length of the questionnaire to maximise participation and seek more input from clinicians when designing specific questions.
- Overall, the adoption of a digital methodology was considered a positive development, there were suggestions around shortening the timeframe between text messages, expanding the sample period and exploring ways to engage more with ethnic minority groups to maximise participation.
- Generally, the feedback on the dashboard was quite positive but there were suggestions for improvement around the use of filters, display of qualitative data and the process of user set up.

7. Next steps

The National Care Experience Programme Steering Group will review the recommendations outlined in this document and will use this information to inform and improve the future planning and delivery of the National Maternity Experience Survey and other relevant surveys within the National Care Experience Programme.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

1. In relation to the National Maternity Experience Survey, what area do you work in?

- General Manager
- Director of Midwifery/Nursing or Clinical Nurse Manager
- Midwife in a maternity hospital/unit
- Community/public health nurse
- Governance group member e.g. Advisory Group
- Patient Administration System
- Patient Advocacy / Liaison
- Quality and patient safety
- Other – please specify

2. Was there anything particularly good about the implementation of the survey?

(e.g. questionnaire, administration of the survey to eligible participants, dashboard, survey communications/promotional material such as posters, leaflets?)

3. What could be improved about the implementation of the survey

(e.g. questionnaire, administration of the survey to eligible participants, dashboard, survey communications/promotional material such as posters, leaflets?)

4. Do you have any feedback about how the survey was administered to eligible participants in 2025

(e.g. online survey participation, administration of the survey via text message)?

5. Have you accessed the survey findings on the new online dashboard?

- Yes
- No
- If yes, please tell us about your experience with the dashboard.

