

Online survey of women's experiences of prevention, identification and management of pelvic floor dysfunction in the perinatal period.

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Background:

The NHS Long Term Plan (3.17) committed to improve access to postnatal physiotherapy to support women to recover from birth and access to multidisciplinary pelvic health clinics and pathways across England by April 2024.

The Perinatal Pelvic Health Services (PPHS) will lead local delivery of the NHS Long term ambition to improve the prevention, identification, and treatment of 'mild to moderate' pelvic floor dysfunction following birth, and ultimately reduce the number of women living with pelvic floor dysfunction postnatally and in later life.

The Southeast London (SEL) Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) is an Early Implementer System (EIS) for the PPHS. To date, the LMNS had not investigated the prevalence of PFD and the women's experiences of prevention, identification and management of PFD in the perinatal period.

Aims:

As part of the development and implementation of the PPHS, this descriptive study aimed to understand the prevalence of PFD and the women's experiences of prevention, identification and management of PFD in the perinatal period across the SEL LMNS.

Study design, materials and methods:

The PPHS team designed a 27-question, both open and closed-ended, online questionnaire survey for this descriptive study.

The survey inquired about age, self-reported ethnicity, the type of delivery, how many times the participant had given birth, presence of PFD, how easy it was to discuss PFD with healthcare professionals and if pelvic floor muscle training (PFMT) and prevention and management of perineal trauma were provided in the antenatal and postnatal period.

The survey also investigated any difficulties preventing access to specialist management, the information they would have liked to be given and how they would have liked to receive it and by whom. The survey concluded with a question about their preferences regarding the delivery of the PPHS.

The survey was distributed via text message to women and birthing people currently pregnant or who have given birth within the last 5 years across the LMNS. The survey was open from three months from January to March 2022. The survey was promoted via the Southeast Clinical Commissioning Group (SE CCG) Media pages and Maternity Voice Partnerships (MVP) social media accounts.

Moreover, to address health inequalities, the PPHS team engaged 28 voluntary organizations representing seldom heard groups, collaborating with LAWRS and IRMO to organize Spanish-language pelvic health awareness sessions, where 64 women shared their antenatal experiences.

Results:

Survey Participants:

- 195 women and birthing people took the anonymous survey.
- Majority (171, 88%) were aged 25-44, ranging from 25 to 54.
- Ethnicities: 116 (80%) were White, 18 (9%) Black, 10 (7%) Mixed, 7 (4%) Asian.

Conclusion:

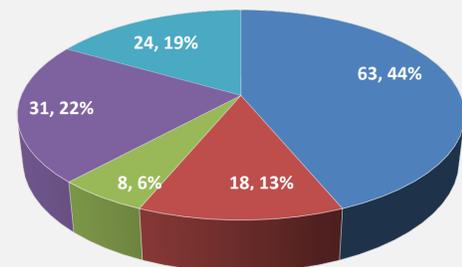
This descriptive study helped us to understand the current provision and lack of antenatal education on pelvic health and PFMT. This study has also helped us to understand our local women and birthing people's preferences for how antenatal pelvic health and PFMT should be delivered.

The PPHS team educated healthcare professionals and developed a standardised antenatal education on pelvic health and PFMT using the information provided by the survey and rolled it out across the LMNS. This study will move forward by evaluating these classes to make certain they are meeting their objectives and are accessible and suitable for women and birthing people.

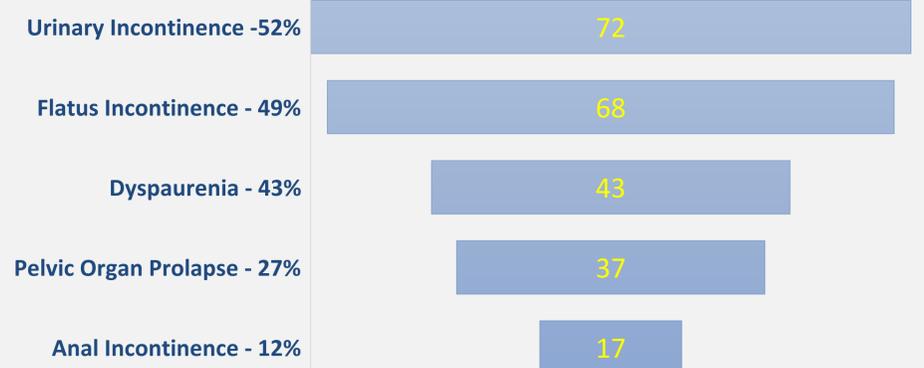
Results:

Types of Deliveries

- Spontaneous vaginal deliveries
- Forceps deliveries
- Ventouse deliveries
- Caesarean sections



Types of Pelvic floor dysfunction



Prevention and Management of Pelvic Floor Dysfunction:

- Only 74 (54%) received information on PFMT.
- 81 (65%) received no information on preventing perineal trauma.
- 83 (67%) received no advice on managing perineal trauma.

Access to Specialist Services:

- 59 out of 121 (49%) didn't know about Specialist Services availability.
- 23 (19%) thought PFD would resolve on its own.
- 17 (14%) felt embarrassed to discuss PFD.
- 54 (45%) wanted a female clinician.
- Barriers to access included distance and family/work commitments.

Women's Preferences for Pelvic Health Services:

- 68 out of 195 respondents had specific ideas for desired information.
- Preferred information: PFMT, Physiotherapy, Perineal trauma advice and post-partum pelvic floor examinations.
- Preferred delivery methods: face-to-face (74, 61%), written (48, 40%), online links/app (48, 40%), group sessions (34, 28%).

Service Development Wishes

