



# healthwatch

## Blackburn with Darwen



### DISCLAIMER

This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff and patients who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.



## INTRODUCTION

On Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024 commencing 9am Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen undertook an Enter and View visit to the Rossendale Birth Centre.

This was an announced visit undertaken by authorised representatives from Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen who have the authority to enter health and social care premises, announced or unannounced, to observe and assess the nature and quality of services and obtain the view of those people using the services.

This visit was arranged as part of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen's Enter and View programme. The aim is to observe services, consider how services may be improved and disseminate good practice. The team of trained Enter and View authorised representatives record their observations along with feedback from patients and staff. This together with an environmental assessment, staff and patient questionnaires and online research forms the basis of the report.

This Enter and View was part of a wider programme of work carried out by Healthwatch Together (HW Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Lancashire and Westmoreland and Furness) engagement project which will investigate the experiences of women and families who access maternity and neonatal services within Lancashire and South Cumbria, and whether people feel they have choice and personalisation in their care.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen would like to thank the staff and patients at the Rossendale Birth Centre on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024, for making us feel welcome and taking part in the visit.

## METHODOLOGY

An Enter and View visit was arranged to speak to patients and staff attending Rossendale Birth Centre in the morning of Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024.

This was an announced visit with contact being made in advance by letter and email.

We had 4 fully trained representatives present on the day. These were clearly identifiable by a Healthwatch ID badges.

Representatives were sensitive to the issues that may arise from the visit, and signposting to NHS mental health services was available if required. All responses were anonymous.

We spoke to 4 patients, 1 relative and gathered feedback from 4 staff within the constraints of the clinic's routine, people's willingness, and ability to engage and access to people in public areas. Discussion was structured around information available in pregnancy, decision making and general experience of the visit to the birth centre.

The team also recorded their own observations of the environment and facilities. The visit was intended as a snapshot of the patient experience on that day.

### Team Members

Sarah Johns HW staff (Lead)

Katie Merry HW staff

Jenny Hayes HW staff

Liam Kershaw-Calvert HW staff



## SUMMARY

Rossendale Birth Centre is a very accessible unit in the centre of Rawtenstall which is predominantly used for midwife clinic appointments. Although the centre feels like a repurposed section of the main Health Centre rather than a dedicated Birth Centre, it is clean, and the waiting room and birth room are welcoming and bright with good information available for expectant parents and nice touches to the birth room to make it feel less clinical.

The entrance to the Birth Centre could be better signposted from the carpark and the sign for the Centre is rather small which could be problematic for patients with visual impairment.

The Centre appears underutilised for births with staff feeling that better promotion on social media and increased staffing would encourage more patients to have their birth at the centre. Blackburn Birth Centre has a dedicated Facebook page with a good following, similar for Rossendale might be a good way to promote the Centre to local residents.

Patients' feedback about care at the centre is positive and they felt that the midwives are friendly and supportive.

Staff reported that they felt that appointments were not long enough with patients and that better communication with GPs would be beneficial to their roles, but a really strong sense of teamwork comes across in their responses which is a credit to the Trust. Staff also made the suggestion of weekend clinics at Rossendale to alleviate pressure in Burnley hospital.

The only negative feedback about care from patients was experiences at Blackburn and Burnley hospitals and the lack of detail around appointments and notes on the Badger notes app. Some of these issues might be addressed easily by digital teams within the ICB.



## WHAT WE SAW

### Pre visit

Representatives first undertook an overview of the hospital website - <https://elht.nhs.uk/services/maternity-and-newborn-services/place-birth-choices>.

There is very limited information about Rossendale Birth Centre. It states that it is a midwife led centre and

“Rossendale Birth centre will continue to be run by an on-call Midwifery system. The unit is opened as required for those in labour. Anyone booked to have their baby at Rossendale will be informed to initially contact Burnley Birth Centre to be triaged by a midwife. Following this assessment, a midwife will then be arranged to attend the birth centre at Rossendale.”

There is a virtual tour on the website and on YouTube, but this was filmed in 2015 therefore an updated version might be beneficial.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNghGvnz7tl>

We understand from speaking with maternity services staff that 10 women had their baby at Rossendale Birth Centre in the last 12 months. However, ante and postnatal clinics are also provided at this location. It provides maternity services to women in the Blackburn, Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley areas.

There is accessibility information available on AccessAble.co.uk for disabled people and carers, however this mainly relates to the main health centre and does not cover the Birth Centre. We would recommend that East Lancashire Hospitals Trust consider commissioning AccessAble to extend their information to cover the Birth Centre to allow disabled parents and those with either hearing or visual impairment to access the Centre with confidence.

The CQC’s latest inspection of Rossendale Birth Centre in 2023 rated the service as good overall and for being safe and well-led.



## Location

### Parking and the Birth Centre grounds

Rossendale Health Centre is located on Bacup Road and can be accessed from Rawtenstall Centre to the West via Bacup Road and accessed from the A682 to the West via Bacup Road.

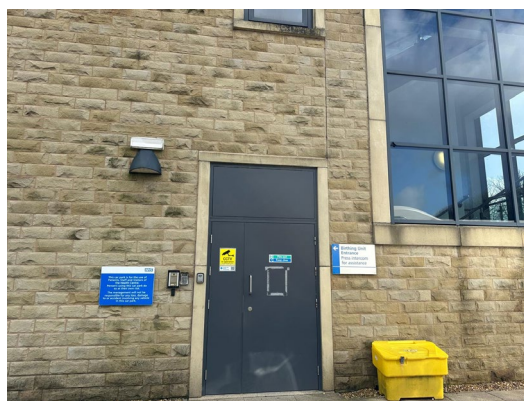
Rossendale Health Centre has both standard and Blue Badge parking for staff and visitors.

There is a bus stop located just outside the Centre on Bacup Road, which is served by routes 464, 483 Irwell Line and 998 on a regular basis. The main bus centre in Rawtenstall is a 5-minute walk away and there are regular buses to Blackburn, Burnley, Accrington and other areas in Rossendale. Accrington is the nearest train station 5 miles away.

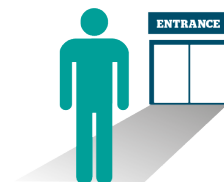
There is free carparking on site with spaces for standard and blue badge holders. However, it was noted that the carpark can get full quickly.



The grounds of the Health Centre are well maintained and there is signage for the Centre on both sides of the building. However, the Birth Centre entrance is not as easily visible from the car park and some patients we spoke to had accessed the main building before being redirected by staff to the external door for the Birth Centre.



Larger signage and directions from the carpark would be beneficial for patients.



## Inside the Birth Centre and Welcome

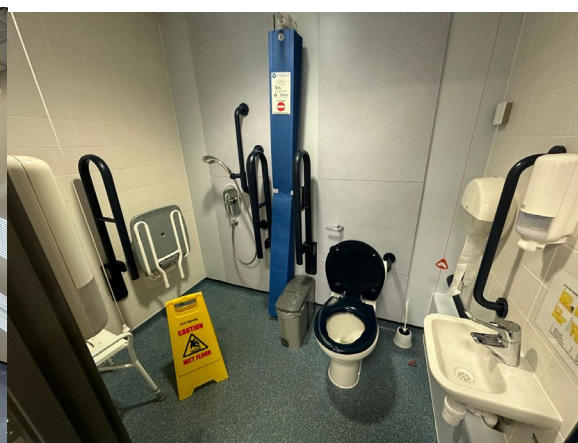
There was only one midwife at the Centre on the morning of our visit and she was unaware of our arrangements, however, was amenable to our team carrying out the visit and speaking with patients in the waiting room. She was busy with patients all morning during our visit, and it was apparent that the appointments are time pressured for staff to cover all necessary topics with the patients. Access to the Birth Centre is via an intercom buzzer. The small signage could be problematic for patients with visual impairment wishing to access the Centre.

A fire alarm went off during our visit which we had not been informed of, but the midwife came out of clinic to let us know that it was a test.

The corridor in the Birth Centre is rather dark and the Centre feels that it is a repurposed area of the Health Centre rather than a dedicated Birth Centre. The waiting room was not labelled as such but as a birth room, however, the midwife meets all patients in person and directs them to the waiting room.

The Centre was very clean throughout, and the waiting room was bright and filled with relevant information for expectant parents. There is an ensuite bathroom for patients to use which was clean and accessible.

There are 6 bathrooms in the Centre, which feels rather excessive for its needs, but all were clean and well maintained and accessible.





## The Birthing Room

The birth room was spacious, clean and well laid out. There were nice touches with butterflies on the walls, tealights around the edge of the birthing pool and a docking station for patients to be able to play their own music.



There was an ensuite bathroom which was accessible, clean and bright. There were nice touches again with butterflies on the wall.





## WHAT STAFF TOLD US

We received feedback from 4 members of staff who operate from Rossendale Birth Centre with their responses below.

### *Do you feel supported to carry out person centred care?*

All 4 members of staff responded yes although one was 'yes mostly'.

### *Do you feel that there are enough staff available to meet the needs of your patients?*

Two members of staff felt that there is enough staff, but the others stated, "When we are full staffing levels, but due to sickness and lack of midwives not always."

"No, I feel that if the birth centre was staffed more, women may feel more inclined to choose to birth here."

### *What is currently working well?*

"Having the Rossendale Birth Centre clinic at the heart of the community, saving families having to travel to Burnley or another out of area clinic."

"We provide good continuity to our women in Rossendale when staffing is good."

"Excellent team working."

"Good teamwork, supportive staff within Rossendale"

### *Are there any changes that could be made to improve the experience for families at your service?*

"A weekend clinic in Rossendale would take pressure off Burnley Birth Centre clinic, Midwives on visits when there is reduced clinics across East Lancashire and would be much more convenient for the families we serve. The parking is also much better for these families."

"Full continuity of carer, more time in appointments for our families. More midwife groups for the families to attend. Better communication between the midwives and GPs needed."

"Oxygen point in the clinic room as women often faint"

"Better staffing, promotion of the birth centre on the social media groups and to antenatal women, offering aromatherapy to Rossendale women here."



### *What is your experience of working here?*

“It's a well-placed, easy clinic for pregnant individuals and newly delivered families to access, as well as for those wishing to birth at Rossendale Birth Centre.”

“I have worked in Rossendale as a midwife for the last 9 years. This is the best area for continuity at present.”

“I enjoy being part of the Rossendale team.”

“Good experience, just needs improvements as listed above”.

### *Are there any changes that can be made to improve the patient experience?*

“More awareness around the birth facility. A Saturday or Sunday clinic.”

“More time in clinics to give to our patients. Better communication with GP practices”

“Longer appointments/ better IT/ better signage as there a few clinics that run out of Rossendale.”

### *How satisfied are you with your role?*

All four members of staff reported that they were satisfied with their role.



## WHAT PATIENTS TOLD US



We spoke with four patients during our visit to the Birth Centre, with their responses to our survey questions below.

### *Please describe your experience here so far*

“Communication has been good, and the midwives are always welcoming. I feel like you can talk about anything with any of them.”

“Fantastic. The care is really good, and the staff are nice and friendly.”

“All been good. Staff have been friendly. The only negative has been that the consultant appointment was late by an hour.”

“This is the first time I have been, so far I've found them really helpful.”

### *Have you received information in a way that is easy for you to understand?*

“Yes”

“Yes, though the Badger notes app is a nightmare. On the appointments section for when I come here, it says outpatients which is in a different part of the building. I can't tell from looking at the appointments list which ones are important that I'd want my partner to come along to. It also kicks you out every 5 minutes.”

“Yes, but Badger notes isn't great. There's a real lack of notes on there. It's quite basic”.

“Yes, the App”

### *Have you felt informed about any decisions about your care?*

“Yes”

“Yes. I've not really had any major questions but when I've had queries they've got back to me straight away.”

“Yes, it's all been fine other than not knowing it was a consultant appointment that time.”

“Yes”

### *Do you have a birthing plan in place?*

None of the patients we spoke with had a birthing plan yet because it was too early in their pregnancy.

### *Have you felt that your physical and mental wellbeing have been supported? If not, why?*

All the patients felt that their wellbeing had been adequately supported.





*Do you know who you can contact if you need any additional support or information?*

“There’s a list of contacts on Badger app.”

“The contacts details are on the app. I do like having the app because I’ll forget!”

“Yes, my midwife and there’s loads of contacts on the app.”

“Yes”

*Is there anything else you would like to share with us today about care you have received throughout your pregnancy journey?*

“Just that Sam the midwife at Bacup is really lovely.”

“My 12-week scan at Rossendale was really easy but when I went to Burnley for my 20 week scan the parking was awful and my partner nearly missed it. But the staff and service were great.”

“The care I received at Blackburn hospital when I went for my 20-week scan was dreadful. The communication was terrible - I was told I don’t have a picture and then was put in a separate room and left on my own. I was terrified my baby might have spina bifida and no one reassured me. They didn’t let me go past reception when I left because they didn’t want other patients to see me upset. However, the consultant I saw later was really lovely and it turned out the baby was absolutely fine.”

“Not really I’m early days yet.”



## Further Reference

CQC report - <https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/RXRE9/inspection-summary#npimaternity>

Date of publication 6/1/2023

## Response from Provider

### Dear Sarah Re: Enter and View report in respect of Maternity Services at ELHT

We are extremely grateful to the Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen team for their visit to Blackburn Birth Centre, Antenatal Ward, Antenatal Clinic, Rossendale Birth Centre and the engagement roadshow across community groups, family hubs and online across our areas in March 2024. Such meaningful feedback offers us as a maternity and neonatal service great opportunities to ensure we hear the voices of women, families and multi-disciplinary team members, further highlighting areas of good practice to inform any improvements as we strive to continuously provide a high-quality service for all our diverse population.

We are delighted to receive positive feedback across the services involved in the visit. We are proud of reports that our areas are welcoming and bright, our staff are friendly, caring, and supportive towards our women and families and staff morale is generally high with a strong sense of teamwork and support for one-another.

In response to feedback included in this report, we would also like to make the following comments:

- We acknowledge feedback raised by both staff and patients regarding the length of appointments and delays to appointment start times that women and families are experiencing. We can assure our service users that this is under consistent review with a recent demand and capacity exercise to facilitate more appointments with particular reference to our diabetic clinics being undertaken. We commit to continue with such exercises to improve this challenging position in view of high numbers of patients requiring both consultant and midwifery-led care. This challenge is nationally recognised within maternity services, ELHT seek to align to any national guidance to inform local reviews to improve antenatal clinic and community midwifery clinic appointment length and wait times. The next direct focus is a demand and capacity exercise on booking appointments and community clinic appointment times.
- We are pleased to receive positive feedback in general regarding the Badgernotes app being of benefit, easy to use, and providing information in a way that is easy to understand. However, navigating the system for diverse groups one example being non-english speaking is an area we wish to focus on and improve, hence ELHT have designed a step-by-step patient information leaflet to be provided in the top required languages for our demographic, detailing the initial important information every women may need about our services from the point of known pregnancy. We continue to review and optimise the system regularly through our Digital Optimisation Group and the comments made within these reports regarding improvements needed will be addressed through this process. We acknowledge that the main improvement evident is with regards to the appointments in terms of detail of appointment type, notification of appointment changes and publication of notes following appointments.
- Maternity staffing is under constant review and managed as per local and national guidance. Any safety concerns relating to multi-disciplinary team staffing would be raised at divisional management boards with escalation to the executive and non-executive maternity safety champions aligned with CNST Safety Action 9 guidance. Such concerns of this nature would be further discussed at Trust Board level meetings. The review of safe maternity staffing levels is

completed using the nationally recognised staffing establishment tool Birthrate+ with the application of professional judgement. ELHT introduced the Birthrate+ acuity app in 2023 which assesses point prevalent staffing levels based on the clinical needs of every woman and infant for most areas of the maternity services. This enables service leaders to determine whether their unit is adequately staffed as safe levels throughout the day and night.

- We continuously review the information we provide to our women and families and look to ensure this is available through a range of sources and formats to meet the preferences and accessibility needs of our women and families. We are therefore pleased to receive feedback that our website is most useful, and that the displayed information on our wards supports understanding of a range of topics such as health promotion and promotion of Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership and Family Hubs. We acknowledge feedback that in some areas there is a lot of written information displayed especially in poster formats. We will work closely with our team and communication colleagues to ensure the posters displayed are relevant, up to date and where possible reduce the number of posters. We are currently working to implement key information being available in digital video formats including being provided in the languages required by our women and families and look forward to hearing the feedback on this new and innovative information channel in future.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank “Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen volunteers and staff for the work undertaken to support the Trust in highlighting positive findings from service user, carers, families, and staff, as well as highlighting areas for improvement.

With kind regards,

Tracy Thompson

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