



St John's Hospital **Labour Ward Visit** Maternity Voices Partnership

Visit held on 27 April 2026

Who took part

Maternity Voices Partnership

Vivianne Carter, lay member
Camille Del Pozo, lay member
Kate Florio, Doula
Mathilde Peace, MVP lay chair
Joy Cassidy, lay member (on MS Teams)

Labour Ward

Kirsty Jackson, Labour Ward Charge Midwife



The Visit

Useful information we learned



The facility

- There are **9 birth rooms** in total.
- **Three** of the birth rooms have a **birthing pool**.
- **All** the rooms have ensuite facilities (toilet and walk-in shower with seat).
- There are **birthing balls, peanut balls and ballet barres in all the rooms**.
- Each birth room has **access to a full range of monitoring equipment** should it be needed for mother or baby during labour and birth.
- There is a dedicated **maternity theatre** available within the labour ward.



A Birth Centre and an Obstetric Unit

- ▶ **The maternity unit provides care ranging from midwifery-led care (akin to a Birth Centre) to consultant-led care (akin to an Obstetric Unit).**
- ▶ The rooms equipped with a birth pool are most appropriate for midwifery-led care.
- ▶ There are around **2400 births** per year in the unit.
- ▶ St John's Hospital has a **Special Care Baby Unit** for babies born after 32 weeks who have general conditions such as low birth weight, preterm birth, infection, or jaundice.
- ▶ The Neonatal Unit at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh is an intensive care nursery for newborn babies who are sick or premature, especially those who are very small or seriously ill. Some women and birthing people will be advised to give birth at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh if their baby is likely to require this level of care.

Entrance to the labour ward





This panel introduces the healthcare professionals who work on the ward (with individual pictures) and is a useful feature for families.

It might be helpful to add a visual key to the colour-coded uniforms as well, such as this example:





Active Birth



- ▶ Active birth is promoted and supported by the labour ward team made up of midwives, doctors and anaesthetists:
- ▶ The Charge Midwife is considering introducing the Labour Hopscotch approach already used in NHS Fife: [Labour Hopscotch | NHS Fife](#)
- ▶ There is a range of birthing aids in all the rooms.
- ▶ Aromatherapy is available, as well as soft lights and mood-inducing lights.
- ▶ Posters about labour and birth positions are visible in each room. The beds are all fully adaptable to support this.
- ▶ A full range of pain relief is available, including SWI (sterile water injections), Remifentanil PCA and mobile epidurals. See more information on the website: [Your pain relief options in NHS Lothian – Maternity Services](#)

Midwifery-led Birth Room with Pool





Birthing Room without Pool

We felt that the other birthing rooms had a very clinical look and that some of the 'active birth' elements of the pool rooms – such as the affirmation posters, soft lights, etc... - could easily be added to the other rooms.



Active Labour Posters



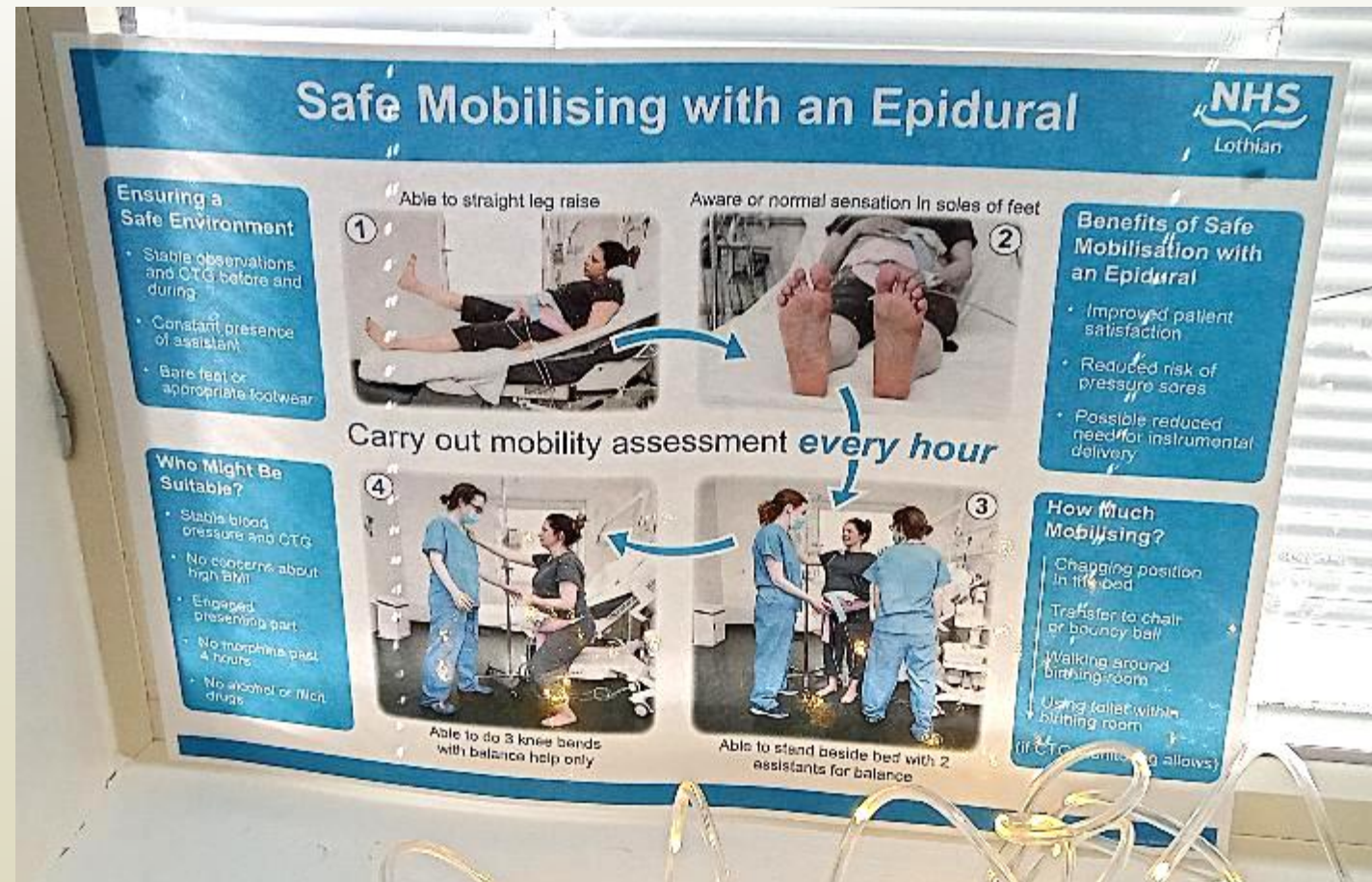
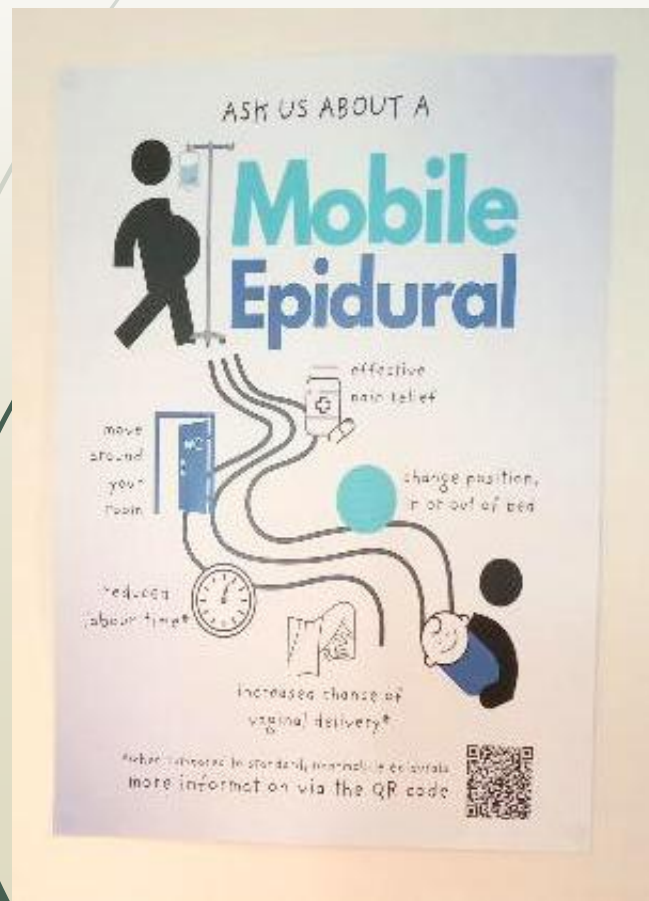
I AM STRONG
I AM CAPABLE
I AM PASSIONATE
I AM RESILIENT
I AM WORTHY
I AM FREE
I AM POWERFUL



Aromatherapy



Mobile Epidural is now offered as standard and there is a poster showing how to mobilise. A video is available on the website:
[Your pain relief options in NHS Lothian – Maternity Services](#)



Active Birth Group



It is hoped that the Active Birth Group, which has previously met on several occasions, will be able to resume in the near future.

Achieving this will require senior staff to have protected time to effectively support this important programme of engagement and continuous improvement.

Ensuring dedicated time is in place will enable meaningful involvement and demonstrate the value placed on collaboration with service users, recognising it as an essential part of high-quality maternity care rather than an additional responsibility.

Cozy Cuddle Scrubs



Stacey Boyle, an Elective Section Midwife, and Marianne Hay, Senior Charge Midwife, developed special scrubs for partners so that babies born by caesarean section can get all the benefits of skin-to-skin contact.

Babies delivered by Caesarean Section can now be carefully placed into the fleece tops worn by the birth partner while the surgical team focus on the mum and the completion of the procedure. Newborns can nestle inside the scrubs and immediately reap all the benefits of skin-to-skin contact with fathers/birthing partners until mum/birthing person is able to.

These special scrubs are now made in Scotland and will soon be available to all maternity units through the NHS procurement catalogue. Read more here:

[Game-changing innovation for newborns](#)

Cozy Cuddle Scrubs Video:

[Midwife designs special medical scrubs for fathers of C-section babies - YouTube](#)



THIS GOWN IS DESIGNED FOR
WARMTH ONLY - IT IS NOT FOR SUPPORT.
ENSURE THE BABY IS HELD FIRMLY BY A
CARE GIVER AT ALL TIMES.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO
VIEW AN INSTRUCTIONAL
USE VIDEO





Discussion



- ▶ We asked about the **use of Remifentanyl as a pain relief option**. This patient-controlled method seems to have benefits: the drug dissipates quickly and has minimal impact on the baby so it can be effective right to the point of birth. The labouring person can be supported to anticipate contractions and press the release button in advance as the drug takes a few minutes to take effect. Each dose provides relief for a few minutes.
- ▶ The MVP members suggested that more information about this method should be made widely available so that it becomes a better-known option and is not solely used as an alternative to an epidural when this is contra-indicated.
- ▶ We talked about the **rising caesarean birth rates** and the multi-factorial reasons behind this trend. The members expressed their concerns at the apparent lack of interest in understanding the trend and worry about the impact on services if caesarean births continue to rise.



Follow-up

- ▶ The MVP will continue to ask that Senior Staff are adequately supported in order to **resume the meetings of the Active Birth Group**. This group as well as its equivalent at the Royal Infirmary should become statutory groups on all the labour wards. Action: MVP Chair.
- ▶ The MVP felt that all the birth rooms could benefit from the 'active birth' encouragements present in the pool rooms – affirmation poster, softer lighting, birth positions poster and birthing aids. The labour ward could consider adding birth stools to the equipment on offer.
- ▶ The MVP will recommend that the **Cozy Cuddle scrubs are adopted at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh**. Action: MVP Chair.
- ▶ The MVP Chair will ask for a **presentation about caesarean births** in NHS Lothian at a future meeting. Action: MVP Chair.

The MVP would like to thank the Labour Ward Charge Midwife, Kirsty Jackson, for her warm welcome and for her time. Kirsty provided extensive and clear answers to all our questions. The members took away very valuable information and enjoyed taking part in the visit and discussions. We were also pleased to meet Alice Howell, Consultant Obstetrician, who stopped by to introduce herself and have a chat with us.

