



MORE THAN A SPINAL:

The anaesthetist's impact on safety, trust and patient experience in planned caesarean birth

Sarah Hudson, Katy Oliver, Annika Smith & Sally Shiels



Background and Aim

UK Maternity services are under intense scrutiny with a barrage of negative press. While learning from mistakes is crucial, we must also consider learning from what works.¹ Patient experience is a core component of high-quality maternity care in national policy.² So what do our patients say?

Aim: To identify key drivers of patient experience in planned caesarean birth

Methods



Prospective service evaluation
Oct – Dec 2025



Data collection

Anonymous
3 questions
Likert scale (1-5) star rating
Free Text: What was good? What could be improved?



Analysis

Thematic grouping of free text
Frequency quantification of themes

Acknowledgements

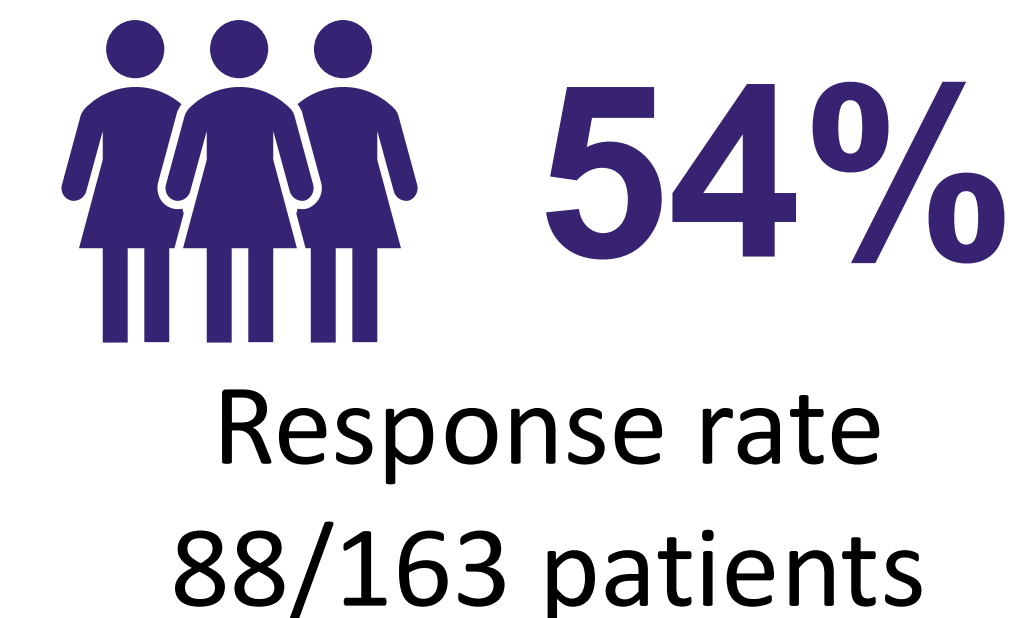


With thanks to the patients who shared their feedback, the maternity and anaesthetic teams and Emma Mallet for her help.



Developed: See our social media videos developed with patients to improve information sharing. Link on QR code.

Results



1 in 3 patients explicitly mentioned the **anaesthetic team** as a positive part of their experience.

Discussion

Patient priorities closely align with **national safety frameworks**: communication, compassion, senior leadership and teamwork.

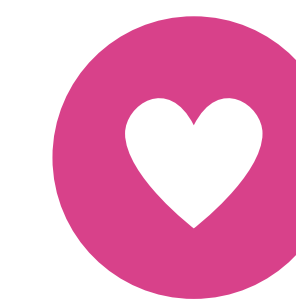
Dual role of the anaesthetist

Clinical Safety



Expertise to keep mothers & babies safe

Emotional Safety



Reassurance at a time of vulnerability

*These findings reinforce the **anaesthetists contribution** beyond technical expertise: **custodians of emotional & physical safety.***

Learning

What should we do differently?

- ✓ Protect senior anaesthetic experience on elective lists
- ✓ Prioritise communication training as a safety intervention
- ✓ Improve pre-operative expectation setting
- ✓ Strengthen continuity and staff support

Next Steps

Expand



Expand evaluation to emergency pathways

Develop



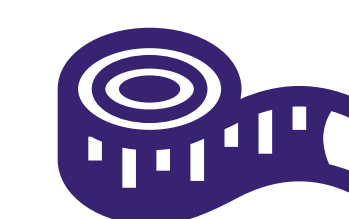
Develop structured comms tools & information resources.

Integrate



Integrate findings into training & local QI initiatives

Continue



Continue to measure what matters & embed in service design

References

[1] Liberati EG, Tarrant C, Willars J, *et al.* Seven features of safety in maternity units: a framework based on multisite ethnography and stakeholder consultation. *BMJ Quality & Safety.* 2021; 30: 444–456.

[2] UK Parliament. *Maternity services in England.* 2023. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9815/CBP-9815.pdf>