

WHAT INFORMATION IS NEEDED TO SUPPORT INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT VAGINAL BIRTH

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BACKGROUND: Women’s birth experiences are shaped by their expectations and the clarity of information about birth options, interventions, pain relief and postnatal care.

OBJECTIVE: To explore what information women think is essential as they prepare for labour and birth.

METHODS: 17 semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed (13 postnatal and 4 antenatal). Thematic analysis was used to formulate themes and interpret the data.

RESULTS:

THEME 1: ESSENTIAL ANTENATAL INFORMATION

Structured antenatal education, including clear timelines for discussing birth plans and emergencies, helps parents make informed decisions and feel prepared for labour and birth..



“There was no real information given so I had to look at it myself, and I was getting information from unreliable sources. It did make me more anxious. “

THEME 2: AVAILABLE MATERNITY SERVICES

Understanding available birth options such as induction, home or water birth, and available pain relief helps parents make informed decisions that reflect their values and preferences.



“They didn’t really discuss anything with me before I went into labour,...I hadn’t been asked whether I wanted a water birth or home birth, I had literally been asked nothing.”

THEME 3: LABOUR AND BIRTH EXPECTATIONS

Knowing what to expect during labour; including possible interventions and the role of support network helped participants feel more confident, less anxious, and better prepared for the experience.



”But in the medical setting especially, I would prefer to make sure that people are asking permission before just blindly doing things.”

THEME 4: KEY POSTNATAL INFORMATION

Expectant parents valued clear postnatal care information, which helped reduce uncertainty and supported a more positive recovery experience..



“It seems to be all about the pregnancy and the baby, but they don’t actually talk about your delivery afterwards”.

CONCLUSION:

This study highlights the value of delivering clear, timely information to expectant parents, which can enhance their experience and satisfaction. These findings can inform healthcare practices and policies to better support families with empathy and efficiency.

