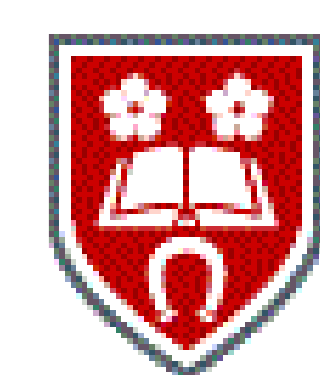




Parental involvement in decision-making about planned late preterm and early term birth

Background

- Late preterm and early term (LPET) birth is associated with increased risks of **adverse health outcomes** throughout life
- When such births are decided upon in advance **many parents are dissatisfied** with the input they are able to have in the decision-making process
- In this study, we explored:
 - **the input expectant parents want and expect** in decision-making about possible planned LPET birth
 - **how their experiences compare** with those wishes and expectations
 - **how they feel** about the input they have

Methods

- Qualitative **interview** study
- **Recruitment** via social media, community groups, charities and snowballing
- Parents were **eligible** if their babies were born in the UK ≤ 6 months before their interview and they had been involved in discussions with doctors in the UK about possible planned LPET birth.
- **12 parents of 9 babies were interviewed** (including three mother-father dyads)
- Data were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis²

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Results

3 themes and 10 sub-themes were generated during the analysis:

Theme 1: *What matters most to us in this decision?*



Theme 2: *We’re in a new and strange place*



Theme 3: *Can we work together to reach a decision?*



Conclusions

Parents want and expect:

- **to feel able to voice** their questions and concerns
- **to understand** why early birth is being considered, their options and the reason behind recommendations
- **to reach a plan** agreed by all as best for the baby, inclusive of other issues important to them, and carried out as planned

If these are to be met, parents need:

1. **Preparation to reduce their shock** when concerns about a pregnancy arise, and to **increase their confidence** about taking part in decision-making about LPET birth
2. **Healthcare professionals** to have access to **evidence-based training** about the increased risks of adverse outcomes associated with LPET birth and to **sources of information** to which they can signpost parents for reference
3. **Healthcare professionals** to ensure they:
 - i. **introduce themselves** and their role
 - ii. assess the **amount and depth of information** parents want and can assimilate and the **extent to which they want to contribute** to decision-making
 - iii. provide clear **information** about the **risks** associated with LPET birth
 - iv. **listen to and sensitively address** parents’ concerns
 - v. **take care over the words** they use

² Braun, V & Clarke, V. (2022). Thematic analysis: a practical guide. Sage, London.

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