

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2025/26: Women's Voices, Advocacy, and Reducing Health Inequalities - Plain English Summary

What one woman told us

"I felt encouraged to make the choice that was right for me and was supported throughout. I felt in control of my birth, and it turned out to be the best birth experience I have had."

This quote shows how important it is for women to feel listened to, supported and involved in decisions about their care.

About this report

This report focuses on maternity care in Kirklees, but many of the issues and suggestions are important for women's health in general. Maternity care is the support women receive during pregnancy and birth, and after their baby is born.

The report shows that women have better experiences and health outcomes when:

- they are listened to
- they are treated with respect
- they are involved in decisions about their care

When women do not feel heard, their care experience and health can be affected.

Understanding inequalities

Some women are more likely to have a worse experience during pregnancy and birth because of their background, health, or life circumstances. This can include women who:

- are from Black, Asian or mixed ethnic groups
- live in poorer areas
- do not speak English well
- have a disability

- have been through difficult or upsetting events
- face other challenges in their daily lives

In Kirklees, health outcomes are usually worse in more deprived communities.

Why this happens

Health is affected by more than healthcare.

Things that can affect women's health include:

- poverty
- housing
- transport
- education
- employment
- discrimination
- loneliness
- understanding health information

These issues can make it harder for women to get help and make informed choices.

The importance of advocacy

Advocacy means helping people:

- understand information
- know their choices about services and treatment
- speak up about what matters to them
- have their views heard

Advocacy can come from:

- specialist services
- community organisations
- peer supporters
- trusted professionals
- family members

Good advocacy helps women get the support they need and make decisions about their care.

What women told us

Many women said they received kind and supportive care. They valued staff who:

- listened to them
- explained things clearly
- respected their culture and needs
- involved them in decisions

Some women also told us about challenges such as:

- difficulties accessing services
- unclear communication
- language barriers
- not understanding their choices
- feeling pressured into decisions
- concerns not always being taken seriously

These experiences can affect trust and confidence in services.

What is working well in Kirklees?

There are many services helping women and families in Kirklees, including:

- Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP)
- Auntie Pam's
- SWANS
- Community Champions
- Befriender Programmes
- Listening Circles
- Families Together

These services help women feel supported, connected and heard.

What needs to happen next?

The report highlights six important actions:

- Listen to women and involve them in decisions about care and services.
- Take steps to make maternity care fairer for all women.
- Improve communication and help women understand their choices.
- Give every woman kind and respectful care that fits her needs and background.
- Deal with wider issues such as poverty, housing, transport and health knowledge.
- Build on the strengths of communities and local organisations.

Key message

Every woman should feel:

- Heard
- Supported
- Believed
- Respected

By listening to women and making care fair for everyone, we can improve outcomes for women, babies and families across Kirklees.

To read the full report, go to: [Director of Public Health Report | Kirklees Council.](#)