

A Qualitative Investigation of Women's Experiences of Pregnancy, Labour and Birth, and the Early Postpartum Period with a COVID-19 Positive Diagnosis.

Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed in relation to The COVID+ve Births Study.

Introductions: You received your antenatal care and recently gave birth in South London. You are one of a number of women who responded to our adverts and said that they'd be happy to talk to us – so thank you! What I'd like to do in this interview is to ask you about your experiences of your COVID-19 positive diagnosis during your pregnancy and/or at the birth of your baby and/or just after the birth of your baby. My questions will be to find out in a bit more detail about your experiences, and for you to tell me, in your own words, what happened during your pregnancy, labour, and the time afterward up until now including any changes you might have experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are no right or wrong answers – we are interested in the full range of women's experiences and their opinions. The interview will take approximately 30 mins–1hr.

Do you have any questions before we begin? If not, I shall now start to record.

INFORMATION:

As we begin, and before we talk in detail about your experiences, may I get some basic information from you first – about the you and the hospital which was providing your maternity care?

- **Hospital:**
 - Hospital attended for antenatal care
 - Management (Midwifery/Caseload/Consultant led)
 - Due date vs Delivery date.
 - Mode of birth and place of birth
 - Current birth (e.g. first-time mum; multiple pregnancy)
 - How many days/hours admission before birth?
 - How long did you stay in hospital after giving birth?
- **General background information:** Also, can I get some background information.
 - Age and marital status
 - Number of children
 - Employment
 - Ethnicity and religious faith if you have one
 - Was your hospital close to home or in a different region?
 - When did you have your COVID-19 positive result? Pregnancy/Birth/Postnatal

BEGINNING OF PREGNANCY:

Now I would like to ask you a bit more about your pregnancy. Could you tell me about your pregnancy from start? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Were you wanting to get pregnant?
 - Who did you tell about your pregnancy?
 - How was your pregnancy confirmed?
 - Have you had any difficulties during your pregnancy?

If applicable: Was this your first pregnancy? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- If not, how did this one differ?

Did you have someone or some people in your life supported you through your pregnancy? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Emotional, Practical, Physical support?

EXPERIENCE OF MATERNITY CARE:

Now I would like to ask you a bit more about the care you have received during your pregnancy. Could you tell me about your antenatal care? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Which staff did you see?
 - Did you know your Midwife? What were they like?
 - What was your relationship like with your care providers?

And had you thought about what type of birth you might want? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Did you have a written birth plan?
 - Had you planned a hospital, home, or birth centre birth?

Could you tell me about any changes to your maternity care which you experienced due to the 'lockdown' restrictions? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Did your maternity care physically move location?
 - Did your Midwife change?
 - How did this make you feel?

How was information about any changes told to you?

- Probes
 - Letter/phone-call/word of mouth?
 - Was there anything you didn't understand?
 - What would you have like to have been told?
 - What did you think about the information you received and the way you were told it?

THE END OF YOUR PREGNANCY:

These questions are about you reflecting on the time during your pregnancy in the lead up to you giving birth, and time with your newborn. Could you tell be about your labour and birth?

[Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Do you have any fears or concerns?
 - Have you made any additional plans?
 - Any thoughts or feelings?
 - Had plans been changed due to COVID?

Could you tell me about your experience of the hospital?

- Probes
 - Were there any restrictions?
 - What PPE was being used?
 - How did it make you feel?

EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19 POSITIVE DIAGNOSIS:

For the second half of the interview I would like to ask you about how your COVID-19 diagnosis may have affected your experience of pregnancy, childbirth or postpartum period. Would you like to take a break, or are we okay to continue?

When was your COVID-19 positive diagnosis? During your pregnancy or on admission for labour? Or after that? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - When did you find out that you were COVID-19 positive?
 - How did you find out? How was it communicated to you (e.g. staff/app)?
 - Were you symptomatic or asymptomatic? Do you have 'long-COVID'?
 - Did you know you were going to be tested for COVID-19 before admission?

Did you feel you had enough information about COVID-19 and pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Was the information understandable?
 - Who/what information sources did you trust?
 - Did you feel you had someone with whom you could discuss any concerns?

Did COVID-19 affect you and your pregnancy and/or childbirth and/or postpartum experience? If so, how? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Did your planned place of birth change/have to change?
 - Birth partner being present?
 - Antenatal stay longer/shorter?
 - Baby requiring SCBU/NICU admission?
 - Positives? Negatives?
 - Support – Family, Friends/Neighbours, HCPs?
 - Early bonding with child?

How did it feel knowing you had a COVID-19 diagnosis and being pregnant/giving birth? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Physically? Emotionally? Socially?
 - Were there any physical symptoms which made pregnancy and/or childbirth and/or childcare difficult?

POSTPARTUM PERIOD:

My next questions are reflecting on the time since giving birth. How has life been with your newborn? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - Do you have any fears or concerns?
 - Any thoughts or feelings?
 - How do you feel about having a newborn during the pandemic?

Could you tell me about your postnatal care? [Let interviewee volunteer as much information as possible before probing.]

- Probes
 - How have you been accessing it? Who has been delivering it?
 - Any concerns?
 - What information have you had? Has it been sufficient?

FINAL REFLECTIONS:

My final questions are more general about your care.

How are you feeling now about your experiences of COVID-19 and pregnancy/childbirth?

- Probes
 - Emotionally hardest part?
 - Any positives?

If you could recommend changes to the way your maternity care has been delivered what would they be?

- Probes
 - Any changes to your own experiences?
 - Anything from maternity services which you believe is important to support pregnant women, women in labour, or new mums with a COVID-19 positive diagnosis?

Do you have any advice for women in a similar situation to yourself?

I've come to the end of my questions, but is there anything at all you would like to add that perhaps I haven't asked you about? Or do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for your time.