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**Kernow Maternity Voice Partnership**

# Isles of Scilly

## Engagement 2023



**KERNOW**  
Maternity  
Voices

Working in partnership to improve maternity services

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**healthwatch**  
Cornwall

# Contents

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Forward	3
Aims	4
Island Life	5
Off Islands	7
Reaching out to communities	8
Recommendations	9
Main Island	10
Recommendations	12
KMVP Conference 2023	13
General Feedback	14
Contact us	16

# Forward



It is easy to stand in awe of the beauty of the islands and overlook the challenges that the geography presents. Kernow MVP have always strived to include families from the Isles of Scilly in our work and ensure decision makers consider the impact on these families when designing and updating services.

We visited the islands previously in 2019 and received an incredibly warm welcome which was repeated this year. Those that live on the islands, live in a strong community and support each other through thick and thin, we really felt this sense of community during our visit.

I want to take this opportunity to thank every single person who took the time to talk to our team, who shared open and honest accounts of their experiences, who helped us understand the highs and lows of island life. The team got a first hand experience of how the weather impacts life there when fog descended and stranded the team on the island for an extra night!

Going forward we commit to amplifying the voices contained within this report and championing the families and professionals who are so committed to providing safe, personalised and equitable care across the islands.

Nicki Burnett  
She/her  
Kernow MVP lead

# Aims

Our aim was to gather intelligence from pregnant people, their families and professionals about island life with the view to making recommendations where appropriate.



The team visited a local authority run stay and play group



Visit the Community Hospital and Birth Centre.



KMVP Isles of Scilly Conference was open to all medical staff on the island.



Understand the impact of living remotely on an island.



Share and learn across multiple agencies, service users and staff to enable us to influence change where needed.



KMVP Celebration Lunch, open to all professionals and families.




Meaningful engagement requires the Kernow Maternity Voices Partnership to reach out and connect with communities where they feel safe to share their experiences'

# Island Life

## An overview

Travelling to the Isles of Scilly, was transformative for the team when thinking about access to care and delivering care within the community. We saw examples of working partnerships, which resulted in clear care pathways for service users. Staff appeared highly motivated and fulfilled and service users unanimously praised the care they were given across the parenting pathway on the island.

Planning alternative care options, travel arrangements and childcare arose time and time again. Service users took responsibility for their own health needs and made informed choices with the understanding of the benefits and limitations of their environment.

 This was my first visit to the islands, and I had no idea that being cut off from the main land was a possibility. I just hadn't realised that could actually happen'





## Weather

All aspects of life are impacted by weather, and this became instantly noticeable for affecting two major aspects of life: travel and food. Weather can change quickly, and cause travel disruption for days and days at a time.



## Travel

Travel needs careful planning, can be incredibly expensive and unpredictable. Feedback centred around extreme costs for families for routine appointments, impact when planning discharge from hospital and logistically planning in particular for those on the off islands.



## Food

Food sources to the island can become cut off, particularly for families who live on the off islands. Co-Op is the centralised point for shopping and it is common in Winter to not have access to fresh fruit and veg, or for deliveries to be delayed. Families are creative and resilient.



## Risk assessment

All care provided on the island is risk assessed. Risk assessment also forms a huge part of decisions about changing venue of care and escalating during labour. Families take ownership of their own care and understand the need for appropriate and comprehensive risk assessment



Find out more about us and the work we do

**Website:** [www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk/maternity-voices-partnership](http://www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk/maternity-voices-partnership)

**Twitter:** @KernowMVP

**Facebook:** @KernowMVP

**Instagram:** @KernowMVP

# Off Islands

Picture: Medical boat transporting the Health Visitor, Local Authority play worker and Midwife to deliver routine care. March 2023



# Reaching out to communities

## Learning

On the off islands out of season, there is only one shopping boat to the main island once a week. If weather is bad this means that this boat simply doesn't run. There is a special boat, which operates at a higher cost and is run on a first come first served basis. The result meaning life on the off island is very remote, planning is essential and resilience a necessity.

## Birthing

All parents are advised to have their births on the main island at the community hospital or at the obstetric unit on the mainland depending on their clinical need.

## Access to Emergency Care

Paramedics are approximately 40 minutes away when called from the off islands. The air ambulance is accessible during the day at a significant cost, the search and rescue at night costing approximately four times as much. The coastguard will risk assess whether air lifting is required and will risk assess to prioritise care if there are multiple requests for the service.

- Feedback included situations where midwives have had to outline worst case scenarios over the phone in front of service users.
- Coastguards required to risk assess situations without medical knowledge.

## Tourist centred seasonal work reliance

Parents cited working right up until the last minute of pregnancy. Islanders are predominantly self-employed, so taking time off is seen as losing income.

Due to limited access to boats, standard midwifery appointments can result in service users having to take a whole day off work and waiting up to 5 hours for the next boat to make its return journey.





### Recommendation 1

Coastguard has access to a pre-risk assessed list in terms of risk to life for mother and/or baby.

### Recommendation 2

Access to standard midwife appointments on St Mary's to be scheduled alongside the boat on a Thursday.

### Recommendation 3

A midwife to travel to the off island for appointments, so service users can reduce time taken off work.

### Recommendation 4

Subsidised travel costs for the special boat on the off island out of season for pregnant people and those with young families.

### Recommendation 5

Maintaining a flexible working pattern for the Midwife, allowing for flexibility around individuals needs.



Contact us to feedback about your maternity experience:

**Website:** [Kernow Maternity Voices Partnership | Healthwatch Cornwall](https://www.kernowmaternityvoicespartnership.org.uk)

**Email:** [info@kmvp.org.uk](mailto:info@kmvp.org.uk)

# Main Island

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# Learning

The main island hosts the community hospital, and on this trip all parents and staff couldn't rate the hospital highly enough. Phrases like, 'its like a hotel' were used lovingly. Home cooked food in the hospital was also central to peoples experience. Staff were nurtured and service users felt very cared for.

Out of season when the boat isn't in service, service users rely on air travel to access scans on the Main Land.

## Funding

- The trust currently funds for partners to attend the 20-week scan.
- Birthing people get all travel fully funded.

Feedback from service users highlighted a lack of equity surrounding funding. Service users highlighted situations where others appeared to have access to additional funding and requested more clarity around this issue.

## Tourists

Paramedics highlighted the appeal of the islands for pregnant people who are no longer able to fly. There is a high proportion of pregnant people travelling for day trips who potentially can get stuck on the island without access to scans, or the specialist teams they potentially require. There is also no way of knowing these people have travelled to the islands.

### Recommendation 6

Increasing information about travel whilst pregnant on all appropriate digital platforms.

### Recommendation 7

Advice to bring a weeks' worth of medication, even for day trippers.

### Recommendation 8

Have procedures developed on the postnatal ward for discharging families from the Isles of Scilly: eg. Aim to discharge early in the morning, enable as much time as possible for booking travel, awareness of limited travel out of season and potential lack of availability last minute peak season.

### Recommendation 9

Additional contact with staff for service users from Isles of Scilly, recognising that family support networks might not be accessible.

### Recommendation 10

Linking staff from RCHT and the Community Hospital so consistency of advice is given.

### Recommendation 11

Continue further conversation about provision of maternity care on the islands including agreement for support for island midwife during intrapartum care



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## KMVP Conference 2023

### Core Themes Discussed

- Emergency Scenario Training eg shoulder dystocia, familiarity with equipment (PROMPT training). Suggestion for a monthly drop in, to be inclusive of cover staff.
- Emergency transfers in poor weather conditions.
- Planning surrounding term births- to limit the need for emergency care where possible.
- Access to good clear information in terms of scans and monitoring.
- Service users desire to have babies on the island must be balanced alongside risk when decision making.
- Service users utilising social media as a way to secure accommodation and transport on the main land.
- Face to face contact with service users, all appointments are face to face and staff are proud to offer a personal service.
- Role of the GP as 2<sup>nd</sup> Cover for Midwife
- Emergency Care for tourists, an unknown entity. Expectations around air lifting.

Speaking with staff and service users both on the main island and the off islands gave the Kernow Maternity Voice Partnership staff a clear sense of the maternity pathway on the Isles of Scilly.

In many aspects families benefit from a unique lifestyle and staff who offer a flexible and personalised service. The KMVP felt privileged to hear experiences of service users that make this journey complex and challenging at times.

## Next steps

KMVP, Community Maternity Team and Healthwatch Scillies to reconnect in Q3 to follow up actions and continue to develop a robust short term plan.

### Common Themes

Planning to leave the island at 37 weeks, with the view to staying for up to 5 weeks is a common experience. Islanders then need to consider hiring transport, childcare for siblings, planning with schools for extended absences.

People took great comfort in having multiple plans for multiple scenarios. Professional advice is listened too, and islanders feel heard and understood.

Informed decision making resulted in empowered parents. Not all were able to birth in the way they initially planned, but all agreed they were fully supported to make the safest choices.

We recognise that the planning for the proposed Women and Children's Hospital will address directly some of the issues for families on the Island.

Lack of clarity around commissioning arrangements and responsibility for providing care was raised by professionals.

A short-term plan, taking into consideration KMVP recommendations will make a positive impact for both staff and service users on the island.



# Highlights



On this trip KMVP connected with approximately 62 families and staff on the Isles of Scilly.



We held two focus groups with community stay and play events, held a medical conference and hosted a celebration lunch.




Multiple agencies came together: Healthwatch Isles of Scilly, Midwifery, Paramedics, GP's, Health Visitors, Hospital Management, Local Authority staff



Kernow Maternity Voice Partnership  
6 Walsingham Place  
Truro

[www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk)

e: [info@kmvp.org.uk](mailto:info@kmvp.org.uk)

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