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# Women and Maternity Care Providers' Experiences of Planned Home Birth

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## Introduction

Place of birth can impact on a woman's labour and birth experience. Planning to birth at home offers women more control over their environment, with less unnecessary intervention (De Jonge *et al* 2015; Hutton *et al*, 2019; Reitsma *et al*, 2020; van der Kooy *et al*, 2011). Appropriate support from maternity care providers can enhance the woman's experience and optimise outcomes.

## Aim

To examine women and maternity care providers' experiences and perceptions of home birth service provision in Northern Ireland.

## Methods

Online Survey: via social media to women and work email to maternity care professionals.

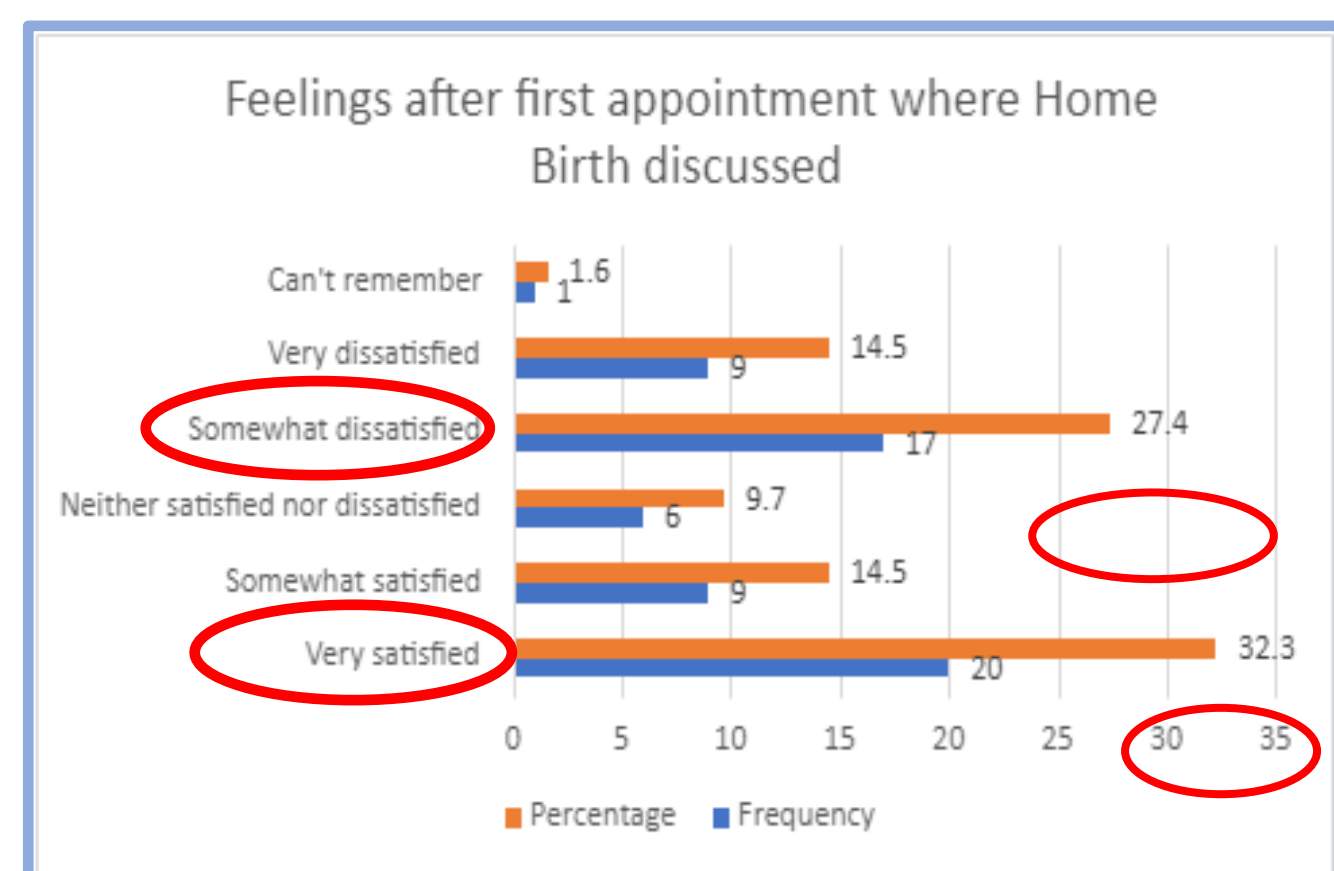
Ethical Approval: Ulster University and North East- Newcastle & North Tyneside2 Research Ethics Committee (IRAS Ref 246711) and HSC Trust Governance approval.

## Results

Responses: n=62 women, 62.9% had a home birth; n=77 maternity care professionals, including Midwives, GPs, and Obstetricians, (64.9%) had provided care for women planning a home birth.

## Women's Experiences

First point of contact was most often a midwife (58.1% , n=36) or GP (38.7%, n=24).



Most women got information on home birth from social media (37.1%, n= 23), friends (24.2%,n=15) and a midwife (19.4%, n=12).

92.3% (36/39) women felt they and their baby were safe in the care of midwives

While most women 74.4% (n=26/39) felt that the home birth service met their expectations to a great or moderate extent, 12.8% (n=5) women rated the service overall as poor or very poor.

## Maternity Care Professionals' Experiences

57.1% of maternity care professionals' agreed women should have the option of a planned home birth if they wished.

48% (n=12/25) felt that women are not provided with the information they need to choose or plan a home birth.

28% (7/25) of midwives felt very confident and 52% (13/25) confident, caring for women having a planned home birth.

## Conclusions

Despite evidence supporting planned home birth as a place of birth, the maternity care professionals in this study did not all support planned home birth.

Some women are not having their expectations for planned home birth met. Further information for women, their families and education for some maternity care professionals is needed.

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