

Description

Complementary therapies postdates service

Jessica Warren – Post Dates Midwife

Our service was introduced to childbearing women/birthing people under the care of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn (QEHKL) Foundation Trust (hospital organisation) in March 2018. It was initiated by one the community midwives together with other keen like-minded individuals. We have successfully established this service with a small team of 8 midwives from various locations, both hospital and community-based.

The service is provided at 40 and 41 week appointments and our initial aim was to reduce postdates inductions of labour by 3-5%.

> We wanted to be able to offer an option that could potentially improve the outcomes for women and their experiences within maternity care.



The appointments are an hour long and can include; an antenatal check, a membrane sweep, acupressure to three pressure points and an aromatherapy treatment – back/hand/foot massage or foot spa. Women with uncomplicated pregnancies are offered appointments which are tailored to suit the needs of each woman.

We have two blends of oils prepared at QEHKL specifically for postdates treatments. Women can choose between these two oils and are given a small amount of oil to take home with them so that their partners can get involved with massaging too. Massage can be beneficial in labour and encourages the partner to have an active role! The clinics are free of charge and provided within existing community midwives hours.

Discussions are based around the woman's needs. Generally these include topics such as early labour care, pain relief, birth expectations, the induction process, optimal fetal positioning, antenatal hand expression and nipple stimulation. Any worries or fears surrounding the labour or induction process can be discussed at length. These are enjoyable appointments as they allow us to have time with women attending, which as a team we really enjoyed!

An audit was conducted the year before the introduction of the service and the year that the service was introduced.

> The results showed a significant impact on reducing postdates induction of labour by 27.6%. We are so proud of this achievement! We exceeded well beyond our target of a 3-5% reduction.

There were some women who would have been eligible to use our service, but for various reasons did not. This gave us an incidental (not planned for) control group, that allowed us to compare the women's outcomes of who *did* and who *did not* use the service. These initial findings are promising; women who had received the postdates treatment had a reduction of epidural analgesia of 27.7% compared to 35.4% of women who did not have the treatment. For women who

had the postdates treatment and did go on to have an induction of labour, there was a significant reduction in caesarean section rates compared to those who did not have a treatment (14.8% vs 29.1%). However, further service evaluation and research is needed to confirm these findings.

The women who have used our service have been kind enough to offer feedback and some have even written testimonials for the service. What they tell us confirms that we have improved the experience of those women giving birth in our area.

As a rural hospital we cover a vast area, so as a team we felt that it was important that the service was equally available to all the women therefore 4 locations were chosen. This included a clinic at the hospital, use of children's centres at Downham Market and Terrington St Clements and at the community midwifery hub in Wisbech. The service was made available only to women who were planning to give birth in our maternity unit, or at home.

Following our audits results we are continually improving our service. We emphasise the referral pathway to all our community teams so that as many eligible women can access the available clinics.

> Our maternity department leads were so pleased with the results and the cost saving provided that they have agreed funding to train more midwives in postdates treatments so our team will grow and more clinics can be offered to all eligible women.

This is fantastic news for developing our continuity of carer models in line with Better Births.

The post-dates clinic was implemented within our organisation at a time of great difficulty and yet we have still managed to strive for excellence with the introduction and successful continuation of the service. We feel this demonstrated the care and compassion we have for the women and families we serve.

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Date Created
25th January 2020