

# **Quality of care during first postnatal visits – what’s important in a global context?**

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## **Background**

The first postnatal visit provided by the public health nurse, health visitor or community midwife is a complex intervention for mothers incorporating physical, social, educational and emotional support, and little is known about the quality of care provided. Supports for mothers in the early postnatal period has positive outcomes for mothers and their children. International evidence suggests a lack of consensus in setting priorities for this crucial visit and this has impacted on prioritising services during COVID-19

## **Aim of the study**

Explore mothers’ and practitioners’ views and experiences of the care they received and delivered during first postnatal visits.

## **Methods**

Exploratory, qualitative design, utilising interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. Five mothers from Ireland were interviewed to explore care quality received during first postnatal visits. Four focus groups were held with n=19 public health nurses.

## **Results**

Mothers defined quality in terms of advice and support for physical, psychological and social wellbeing both for themselves and their baby. Practitioners defined quality in terms of delivery of care practices. However, a lack of standardisation of care practices emerged and workload pressures experienced by practitioners.

## **Conclusions and implications**

Quality in provision of care postnatally lacks consensus. Overarching commitment to empowering mothers in their child-care and self-care abilities is acknowledged. Experiences facilitate reflection and the development of quality improvements to ensure mothers and infants are adequately supported, and practitioners are also supported. Globally, diminished care in the early postnatal period is amplified during Covid-19 pandemic irrespective of circumstances of individual mothers.