

Listen2Baby

Issue 1 | May 2023



Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of the [Listen2Baby](#) newsletter. We are excited to update you on what we've been doing since the study began on 1st September 2022.

If you're receiving this newsletter the chances are that you're already involved, or have contributed to Listen2Baby in some way. You might have taken part in an interview or focus group about your experiences; you might be a member of our Stakeholder Group or Steering Committee; or you might be a midwife or other professional with an interest in monitoring. **Whatever your involvement or interest, thank you!** We're really looking forward to working with you over the next few years.

We want as many people as possible to be involved, so if you know someone who might be interested in receiving this newsletter please share it, and encourage people to register for our mailing list by contacting us on listen2baby@npeu.ox.ac.uk

What is Listen2Baby?

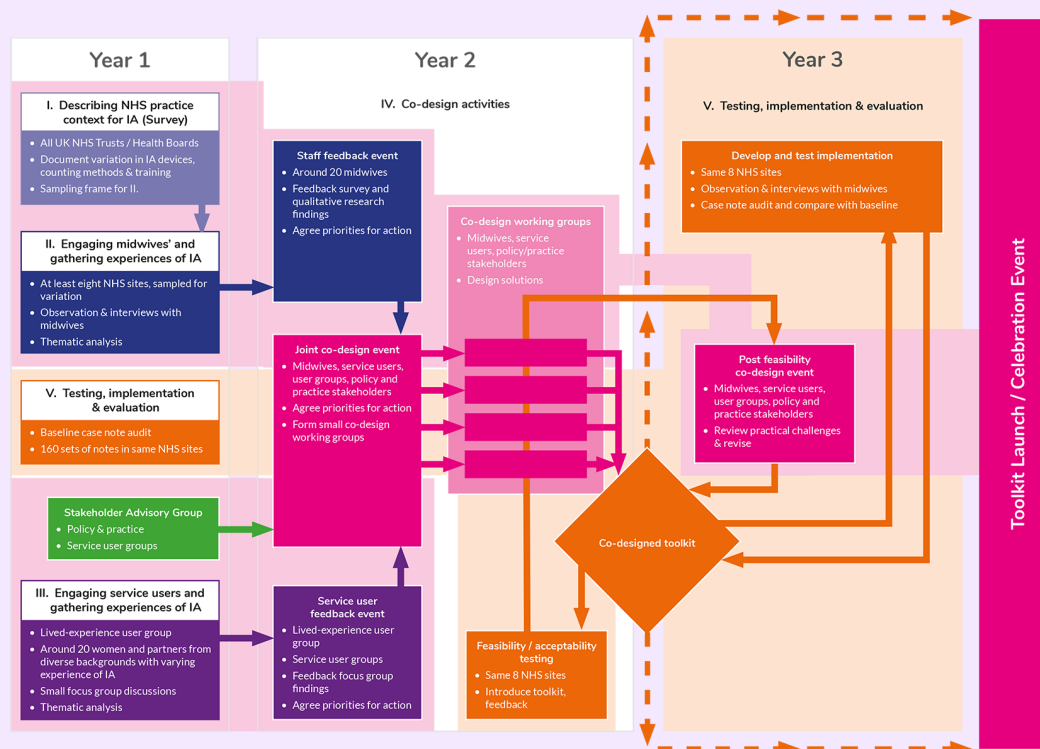
Listen2Baby is a three-year research project funded by the [National Institute for Health and Care Research \(NIHR\)](#) through the [Health and Social Care Delivery Research \(HSDR\) Programme](#).

The overall aim is to improve the way that midwives monitor the baby's heart rate during labour.

Midwives do this using 'intermittent auscultation' (IA), which means 'listening at regular intervals', using a hand-held fetal stethoscope or ultrasound device. Our research will find out how midwives do IA in practice, what devices and counting methods they prefer to use and why, and what problems they have. We will also find out what IA is like for women and their partners. We will work with midwives, women and their partners, and other national experts, to use this information to

design and test a practical 'toolkit' to help midwives do IA in the best way to ensure safety for babies.

There are five separate work packages that make up the study overall. The complicated picture below shows how they fit together and there's more information on our website.



Who's involved?

The research is led by Associate Professor Rachel Rowe, from the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit at the University of Oxford, but it's a team effort including our Listen2Baby researcher Jen MacLellan, who many of you will have met, and another researcher joining us soon.

We're supported by three other groups:

- Our **Lived-experience User Group**, made up of women with recent experience of monitoring during labour who have taken part in a focus group or an interview about their experience and who will be involved in other aspects of the study as it progresses.
- Our **Stakeholder Group**, a collection of experts from national bodies, maternity practice, education and charity organisations working with women and families in maternity, who will advise on and be involved in the study throughout and will help make sure that our research has an impact on policy and practice.
- The **Study Steering Committee**, a small independent group of research, clinical and lived-experience experts who keep an eye on how the study is being carried out and is progressing on behalf of the funder.

In future newsletters we'll be introducing you to some members of the research team and these groups.



What have we been up to?



Preparing documents for ethical review and other approvals

All research, in the NHS and in other settings, is reviewed by a research ethics committee to make sure that it is carried out to high standards and to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of those involved. For research that involves the use of confidential patient information, there is a further review process involving the [Confidentiality Advisory Group \(CAG\)](#). As you'd expect, the team have had to prepare a lot of paperwork for approvals, before we can start any data collection.

- In December 2022 we received approval from the University of Oxford's Research Ethics Committee for our study about women's and partners' experiences of monitoring.
- In March 2023 we submitted our application to the [Health Research Authority Research Ethics Service](#) for approval to observe midwives' monitoring practice in labour and to interview them about their experience. We expect to hear from them very soon and we'll then apply to CAG for further approval before we start planning in our chosen NHS sites.



Starting to collect and analyse data

We have collected data for two of our work packages so far.

National survey of practice

We have carried out a national survey to find out what devices are most widely used by midwives for IA, how they count the fetal heart and what IA training they do. We had responses from over 80% of the NHS organisations providing maternity care across the UK. The research team have analysed the data and are writing up the results.

Women's and partners' experience of monitoring

Jen has spoken with 24 women and partners so far and has started analysing what everyone told her to look for examples of good practice and where things could be

better. We will use the themes we find to create a short film for the co-design work later in the project. Many women who took part in an interview said they were interested in joining the Lived experience User Group who will contribute to the co-design phase. Thank you again to everyone who has shared their experiences so far and to those who want to continue to be involved in the study.



Meetings, meetings, meetings

We spend quite a lot of time in meetings, reflecting on how things are going, interpreting study results, planning, and making sure everything is on track. The research team also need to meet with others who are involved and interested to update them on progress and seek their advice on next steps. We won't bore you with all our meetings (!), but some key meetings so far are:

- In September of last year Rachel travelled to the International Labour and Birth Research Conference in Denmark to launch the study in front of an international audience of midwives, obstetricians, and others with an interest in maternity care.
- In October Rachel met with women with recent experience of monitoring in labour to ask their advice about the part of the study where we observe midwives in practice.
- Rachel has attended meetings of the Fetal Monitoring Leads Network, midwives and obstetricians from across the country who have particular responsibility for monitoring in the hospitals where they work. We'll continue to update and involve them in the project.
- In early December the research team met with our expert Stakeholder Group for the first time.
- Just before Christmas the research team met with the Study Steering Committee. We'll meet them again in June.



Improving our website

We've been updating the information on our website and this will only get better as the project goes on – keep an eye on it! One thing we realised pretty early on is that there aren't many really good images of women being monitored during labour. So we commissioned designer [Liliana Resende](#) who produced the amazing illustrations that are scattered throughout this newsletter and on our website. We hope you like them.

What's next?



We're getting on with analysis of the interviews with women and partners, planning the observation and interviews with midwives, and how we're going to pull everything together to co-design our 'toolkit'.

Now that we're well into the research, we're aiming to send a newsletter every three months. If there's something in particular you'd like to hear about, or if you have any questions or feedback, please get in touch at listen2baby@npeu.ox.ac.uk

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