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Issue 1



Welcome to the first edition of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) newsletter. My name is Helen Carr and I am employed by The Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) as the Project Support Officer/ MVP Lead. My aim is to recruit and engage with Maternity Champions across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The focus is to engage with women and their families to help shape the future of local maternity services. Please read on and meet the fabulous MVP team 😊

Hi everyone, I'm Laura. I help the Maternity Team within the CCG by supporting and administrating for each element of the Transformation Programme. I've been helping the MVP for just over a year now, and it has been wonderful to see the relationships the hospitals have with the women, and where we can try to help close any gaps via the fabulous Champions we are lucky to have helping out.



If you are reading this you are either a maternity service user or know someone that is or has been, please read on to find out more about who we are, what we do and how you can get involved.

In this issue we will be focussing on the following:

- What is the Maternity Voices Partnership? (MVP)
- What is a Maternity Champion?
- Meet the Maternity Champions
- Reflection on the past few months
- What we did/where we are now
- Feedback: Why it is important and what we do with the information?
- How to get involved.

What is the Maternity Voices Partnership? (MVP)

In 2015 a national review was carried out into maternity services. The review report, Better Births was published in 2016. In response to the report and its recommendations NHS England and NHS Improvement advised that Local Maternity and Neonatal Systems (LMNS') should be established. Therefore, there Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LMNS was established in 2017.

Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) is one of five work streams sitting within the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Maternity Transformation Programme.

What is a Maternity Champion?

Maternity Champions are volunteers (who are also maternity service users) who communicate and engage with maternity service users. Before the coronavirus pandemic, this would be to gather feedback from parent and toddler groups, children's centres, libraries, leisure centres, antenatal clinics out in the community and in the hospital and postnatal wards. It would also be useful to know if local families are choosing services outside of the Staffordshire and Stoke area and their reasons for this. The MVP champions will also be involved with co-production and will contribute towards the transformation of Local Maternity Systems.

Feedback will include experiences (positive and negative) from the beginning of pregnancy and beyond birth. From time to time there will be a particular focus/theme which we may ask you to gain feedback on, such as use of maternity digital notes, breastfeeding etc.

During these uncertain times we are working on ways to design a feedback form that Champions can use to gather information which can be fed back into the MVP Lead and can then be presented at the MVP meetings, which are bi-monthly. The aim is to gather as much feedback which will be collated to enable themes and trends to be discovered and fed back to providers and other system partners.

Meet the MVP champions:



Hi, I'm Kirsty, I have a three year old boy called Logan. I didn't have the best experience when I had him and it led me to join as a champion to help make changes for the better. I've now been a champion for two and a half years and absolutely love it – I have learnt so much. I am a cake maker from Stafford but I am making the leap to go back in to education to become a midwife 😊 happy to help – feel free to chat.

Hello, I'm Mary mum of two boys – a five year old and a 19 month old. I joined the MVP at a similar time as Kirsty, two and a half years ago. I'm mostly the stay at home parent, but when COVID isn't lurking I'm a maths and science tutor. I've had a hospital birth that we wanted to be a home birth with the eldest and a planned home birth with the youngest. We do lots of babywearing (and toddler and preschooler wearing), we use cloth nappies and I run a breastfeeding support group.



Hi, I am Katie Emery and I live in Stafford. I have a two and a half year old son and I have been a Maternity Champion for approximately two years. I became a Champion as I know how important it is for services to gain feedback from its users. I had a straight forward pregnancy but a traumatic birthing experience and the Maternity Team were amazing. The maternity services we have are amazing and it is great to work with them to see how services can evolve.

Hello I'm Helen from Stafford, mom of two girls – a four year old and 10 month old. I became a Maternity Champion recently, so still learning the ropes. I've just gone back to work so going through mom-guilt again! I had a great easy birth with my first, but problems with my placenta for the second resulting in a hospital stay. I've bottle-fed and breastfed so experienced the ups and downs of both. Please feel free to chat and ask me - and us – anything.



Hello, I'm Sophie from Stafford, and a first time mum to my two year old twins, Thomas and Hazel. I would say that my birth experience was very traumatic, so being part of such a fabulous program to help improve the maternity services for women and their families is right up my street! Due to being made redundant during the pandemic, I have taken the opportunity to go back into education to gain a career within the healthcare sector, which along with being a Maternity Champion, is something that I am passionate about.

Hello! I'm Naomi from the North of the county over towards Baldwin's Gate and Woore. I have a little girl, Primrose who is two, and had a relatively stress-free birth but very anxious pregnancy! I became a Champion just before the coronavirus pandemic and think it's so important to gather as much feedback as possible so we can celebrate and also improve our services where necessary.



Hi everyone I'm Kerry and first time mum to my baby girl who is now five months old, so my very special lockdown baby. I had an induction followed by a C-section and most of the labour is a blur, thanks to gas and air! I became a Champion just at the beginning of the year and I'm loving the opportunity to sustain and improve maternity services in the area. I live in Stoke and also have an 11 year old (almost 12) step-daughter.

Hi everybody ☺ I'm Faye, first time mummy to a 18 month old girl from Stafford. I became a maternity champion because I experienced the many highs and lows after giving birth and felt there were further support systems that could be made available for both Mums and Dads, alongside having a difficult and a bit traumatic feeding journey. I wanted to be a support for other new families, particularly in this area. I'm looking forward to collaborating ideas and support with other Maternity Champions for people to receive.



Hi, I'm Alexandra, a mum of two from Rugeley. My children are six and three. I breast-fed both children but experienced difficulties with my first. This made me become an advocate for breastfeeding and subsequently shaped my decision to study to become a breastfeeding counsellor. I became a Champion because I am passionate about improving the services offered to women locally and it's been fantastic to see changes being made.

Hi. My name is Fran. I'm Mum to Jacob who has just turned one. I live in the Burton-on-Trent area and also have close links with Lichfield. I had a scary labour but I could not fault the care given by the midwives and doctors the day I gave birth. However, I experienced complications a couple of weeks after giving birth and this is why I am very much looking forward to becoming a Maternity Champion to reach out, support and listen to Mums and families in my area!



Helen's reflections on the past nine months:

These last nine months have been difficult for everyone, but for those families using maternity services it has been especially difficult. Through these challenging times our MVP Champions have endeavoured to keep the lines of communication open to all maternity services users across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, especially for those that have been and continue to be anxious. I am personally grateful to each and everyone of them for their support, advice and commitment. We still have some mountains to climb, but their passion and determination for new ideas and to be involved has been and continues to be invaluable.

What we did during COVID-19 and where we are now:

During COVID-19, the MVP Champions set up their own Facebook page to receive queries and offer advice (non-clinical) to service users. There are currently over 250 members.

One of our Champions has also set up an MVP Instagram page for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, which is regularly updated. Links to the Facebook and Instagram page are available at the end of this newsletter.

We listened to you:

Two Q&A sessions were undertaken by the Head of Midwifery at the University Hospitals North Midlands NHS Trust (UHNM) via video link and promoted on social media platforms.

A Video Tour of the UHNM Maternity Department filmed and promoted on social media platforms.

Communication can and will continue and, although at present it will not be face-to-face, the power of technology has already enabled us to have an extremely success MVP meeting via Microsoft Teams, where we had a full compliment of Champions and professionals in attendance.

Feedback – why it is important and what we do with the information:

Your feedback, positive or negative is vital. If you don't tell us about your experiences we are unable to inform others and unable to work together to improve services. All feedback is gathered by Champions and collated by the MVP Lead who provides a quarterly report to the system-wide Maternity Transformation Board.

How to get involved:

If you would like to get involved either by giving feedback, or by becoming a MVP champion, you can do this a few ways:

Email us: sasot.mvp@nhs.net

Contact the Project Support Officer – Helen Carr: 07928 525377

Join our Maternity Voices Partnership closed Facebook group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SaSotMVP/>

Follow the Maternity Voices Partnership profile Facebook group:
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100019933245323>

Follow the Maternity Voices Champions COVID-19 support group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/219784349316933/?fref=nf>

Follow us on Twitter: [@SaSoTVOICES](https://twitter.com/SaSoTVOICES)

Instagram: [mvp_staffs_stokeontrent](https://www.instagram.com/mvp_staffs_stokeontrent)

Useful documents:

<http://nationalmaternityvoices.org.uk/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/national-maternity-review-report.pdf>

We need your voice to enable choice