



June 2021 Issue 3

Welcome to the third issue of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) newsletter. Previous issues can be found [here](#). An updated list of the local Maternity Champions can be found [here](#).

In this issue we will be focussing on the following:

- Spotlight on The Head of Midwifery and Gynaecology for University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust (UHNM)
- What has the MVP been involved in recently?
- Feedback from service users
- Our focus over the next few months
- How to get involved

Spotlight on the Head of Midwifery and Gynaecology for UHNM, Sharon Wallis



Why did you choose the career you have?

I always wanted to be a midwife from a very early age, but I have no idea why! There are no nurses or midwives in my family, so I can only guess it was a vocation. I was absolutely steadfast that midwifery was for me. I did my nursing first in 1986 and strangely disliked my maternity placement. However, I went on to do my midwifery training and qualified in 1993.

What challenges have you faced getting to where you are now?

I don't consider that I have challenges, just opportunities, which I have taken. I never planned to be a Head of Midwifery, but as my career developed, I took a path into management. I have always been fortunate to be supported through my career and encouraged to push myself. If you would have told the 18 year old me that I would have two Master's degrees, I would have laughed at the idea, but I do and I am proud of everything that I have achieved.

How does what you do make a difference to other people?

I don't provide hands on care, but the decisions I make can impact on every woman that uses the service, hopefully in a positive way. I always have women and families as the focus of any changes or developments we make as a service. There is no greater privilege than being a midwife, sharing the moment that a couple become a family and it is an even greater privilege to lead the team that provide such great care. I hope that I use the skills I learnt as a midwife in my management role to care and support the staff.

What would you say to other women aspiring to be in a similar field of healthcare and who may have doubts about their ability to achieve their goals?

If you love people and want to make a difference, are passionate about the rights of women to make their own choices and are amazed by the power of women to nurture a baby and then birth it, then nothing will stand in your way. Keep women and families as your focus and work for them, seek support and mentoring to guide you and believe in yourself, that you can cope with the studying and academic work and it really is worth it in the end to do the best job in the world.



What has the MVP been involved in recently?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Together We're Better MVP champions have still been unable to visit community centres, baby groups, etc. Instead, the use of technology has been utilised to the best of our abilities. Once again we have communicated, listened, posted, tweeted, and used Microsoft Teams and Zoom, just like everyone else, in order to keep the conversations going. Below is just a snapshot of what the MVP has been up to recently.

- **Co-production:**

The MVP has continued to be actively involved in a variety of co-production activities, including input on various leaflets/policies/animations/input into new services, all of which has been very well received. We have some exciting co-production opportunities coming up, including involvement in University research projects, and stakeholder meetings. Look out for more information on our social media platforms.

- **Staffordshire University:**

Some of our champions are involved in a research project to become Peer Support Workers for pregnant teenage mothers.

Here is what the champions involved say:

Sophie says:

"I am really looking forward to doing the Peer Support Worker role in June and will be really interested to see the results of the research study. I have a passion for the maternal mental health field, and just to be given the opportunity to provide a support network for pregnant teenage mums is a privilege and will hopefully be beneficial to everyone involved."

Kirsty says:

"Through my role as a Maternity Champion I learned of the new research study from Stafford University, involving teenage mums aged 15-19 years, that have been identified as low on mood. Our role is to be a peer support for these mums to see if we can make a difference overall. This is an exciting opportunity with a chance to make a real change to local mums and their families, this will have a significant impact in the future for maternity services and we cannot wait to get started."

- **Wolverhampton University:**

Some of our champions have been involved in stakeholder meetings for the Implementation of the Midwifery apprenticeship degree, which is fantastic news, too.

Here is what the champions involved say:

Kirsty says:

"During these meetings we discussed ideas that would support the implementation of the midwifery apprenticeship degree. For example, we mentioned that all students should wear the same uniforms, no matter the pathway, create a united front and as a service user to make it clear each member of staff's role without added confusion. Further to this we attended a Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) approval event and were asked multiple questions regarding the programme and we were delighted to see this was approved. Alex Birch, Senior Midwifery Lecturer, and her team worked

tirelessly to make this happen and really included us throughout, which made me feel at ease during the whole process.”

Helen says:

“Kirsty and I were asked to participate in the NMC Approval Event on 28 April 2021. The Apprenticeship was approved, and the University has asked if Kirsty and I would continue to be involved in recruitment, delivery and evaluation of the course. This is a great opportunity for the champions, who are also service users, to interact with students and give real-life experiences of maternity services, and to continue to work with the University to help shape the curriculum for future midwives.”

- **International Day of the Midwife (IDM) 5 May 2021:**

To celebrate our fabulous midwives, the MVP champions gathered comments/quotes from service users along with pictures and we promoted them on various social media platforms to say a huge “Thank you!”

- **MVP meetings:**

We continue to hold bi-monthly meetings via Microsoft Teams and we were delighted to be joined at our May meeting by a representative from the Ambulance Service. Representatives from East Staffordshire Family Support Service also attended (the Chief Executive and Development and Engagement Lead; who shared his experience as a father). We are keen to develop further links with them to ensure the voice of partners are heard.

- **A service user story;**

At the monthly Maternity and Neonatal Programme Board meeting, the MVP now have a standing agenda item, ‘A service user story’. This month a Dad’s story was read out, which was very well received and was written from the heart. If you have a story that you are willing to share, please get in touch (details at the end of the newsletter).

Feedback from services users:

Your feedback, positive, neutral or negative is vital to improve the quality of maternity services and increase co-production. Telling us about your experiences means that we are able to inform others and able to work together to improve maternity services. All feedback is gathered by Champions and collated by the MVP Lead who provides a detailed quarterly report to the system-wide Maternity Transformation Board.

If you or anyone you know resides in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and has used Maternity Services we would love to hear your experiences. As well as the main providers (University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust (UHNM) and University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust (UHDB)) we are also keen to hear from people and their families who reside in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent who may have birthed at hospitals such as Samuel Johnson Community Hospital and The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust.

The Maternity Champions COVID-19 support group Facebook page was established to support service users to communicate directly with other service users and offer support during these unprecedented times. The group is monitored and managed by the Champions, all of whom are mother’s themselves. This group will continue should service users find it useful.



We have received a huge amount of positivity since this group has been set up, here are just a few comments direct from service users:

"I cannot fault any of the four days I spent in hospital. From the Healthcare Assistants, Midwives and the Consultant who helped due to forceps delivery. Throughout my 15 hours on the delivery suite, me and my husband constantly had support from a midwife who didn't leave the room during the process."

"It's utterly amazing to me the difference a positive birth experience can make to the start of your parenting journey with a new baby! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

"If you're nervous going for an induction, your nerves will soon go as the team are amazing."

"I had my elective C-section last week and honestly with the current restrictions it wasn't too bad and the staff were all absolutely brilliant and supportive! The visiting hours weren't too bad on the wards, and due to the time I was in theatre/recovery, my husband was allowed to come back for visiting in the evening too."

"Just a quick post to say what an incredible hospital stay, care and support I received over the weekend when I was admitted to have my baby. This was a pregnancy after loss so came with lots of anxieties from myself, but every single person I came into contact with went out of their way to reassure me and keep me informed. From the Bereavement Midwives, my Community Midwife, Consultants, surgeons, Anaesthetists, Doctors . . . You are all amazing and me (and baby) wouldn't be here without you."

Our focus over the next few months

We will continue to communicate and update you via our various social media platforms and will endeavour to answer your questions/concerns in a timely manner.

We will also continue to focus on engagement with seldom heard and ethnic minority service users. We are also keen to hold a specific event for partners and will be promoting this more via our social media platforms.

International Father's Mental Health Day is on 21 June 2021. The MVP has been working with the Perinatal Mental Health Team to co-ordinate a series of speakers/events that will take place throughout the day. Please look out for more information on social media.



How to get involved

Once again, thank you on behalf of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent MVP for taking the time to read this newsletter. If you have found this information useful and would like to find out more about the MVP, whether becoming a Maternity Champion or how to share your feedback you can do this in a few ways:

Email us: sasot.mvp@nhs.net

Contact the Project Support Officer/MVP Lead – Helen Carr: 07928 525377

Join our Maternity Voices Partnership closed [Facebook group](#) (you will be asked to answer three simple membership questions).

Follow the Maternity Voices Partnership profile [Facebook group](#).

Join the Maternity Voices Champions COVID-19 [support group](#).

Follow us on Twitter: [@SaSoTVOICES](#)

Follow us on Instagram: [mvp_staffs_stokeontrent](#)

Useful information:

[National Maternity Voices website](#)

[National Maternity Review: Better Births](#)

**We need your voice to
enable choice**