

Issue 4: Winter 2021

Welcome to the fourth 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 Helen Carr, Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership Lead
- 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 Helen Carr, Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership Lead:



Hi everyone, I thought I would take the opportunity to write an opening paragraph as this will be my last newsletter before I take up a new role.

I have been in this post since November 2019 and I can honestly say the MVP has just grown and grown which is something I will be immensely proud of always. The past two years have not been without their challenges; as we all know COVID-19 took over and is still very much restricting a lot of people and services – maternity services being one of them. However, the MVP has been a constant, and we have continued to gather feedback and stories from women and their families, to ease their anxieties during a time when they should be calm and looking forward to welcoming their new bundle(s) of joy into the world.

Without the wonderful maternity voices champions, who are all volunteers, and the relationships we have built with our maternity providers and wider stakeholders, including the Health Visiting Team, Infant Feeding Team and Local Authority, we could not have provided such fabulous communication with our maternity service users. A massive thank you does not give it justice.

The MVP has worked with University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust (UHNM) and the digital team to give feedback and input into the launch of 'My Pregnancy Notes', the online, personal care record. We have given no end of comments on leaflets and policies and have more recently been involved in the development of the new Maternal Mental Health Service, which is mentioned in more detail below.

I feel honoured to have led such a wonderful team and it has truly been a privilege to undertake this role each and every day.

As I move onto pastures new, I have no doubt that my successor will continue to have the passion that I have to ensure that the voices of women and their families in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are at the heart of the Maternity Transformation Programme. As I have always said, **"We need your voice to enable choice"**.

Thank you all for your continued support and on behalf of the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership have a wonderful Christmas and a prosperous New Year, whilst staying safe at all times.

What has the MVP been involved in recently?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 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 and 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.

One of our champions, explains how being a champion has helped her with a career change:

“Through co-production and attending various different work stream meetings as a maternity champion, I was able to attend (and still attending) the implementation meetings of the new and upcoming Maternal Mental Health Service. This was very beneficial for me, as I have an interest in mental health, specifically maternal and perinatal mental health, and being a part of the implementation of a new service to support families is just amazing. It was through these meetings and networking with key stakeholders that I was able to express my interest in working within this sector, which worked in my favour, as I am now a Peer Support Worker for the new Maternal Mental Health Service. Being a Maternity Champion has enabled me to progress and has opened doors for me that may not have been available if I wasn't part of such a great team!” – Sophie Williams (Maternity Champion).

- **Staffordshire University:**

“Kirsty and I have recently undertaken a presentation detailing the role of the MVP, how the champions gather feedback, and how this gets collated for the wider teams for making improvements of the local maternity and neonatal services. This presentation was undertaken for the first year students studying midwifery at Staffordshire University, who are studying via the new curriculum, which I was heavily involved in, from assessment planning, to attending the Nursing and Midwifery Council validation event. The students felt that the presentation was interesting, important and beneficial for them, as it has given them more of an understanding of our role and how we can incorporate and work collaboratively with universities and students to ensure that women and their families will always be the number one priority for maternity services. We have since been asked to undertake the presentation for the second year students in the New Year, which we are more than happy to do, as it is something that we are very passionate about. We believe that doing these presentations and getting the MVP on the map within universities will help build good relationships with the universities and its students. After all, they are the future workforce for local maternity and neonatal services, so we feel it is important to make our presence known from the offset to advocate for women and their families” – Kirsty Carter and Sophie Williams (Maternity Champions).

- **Wolverhampton University:**

Maternity champions, along with the MVP Lead, have undertaken presentations to students explaining more about the MVP and how important it is that students realise they are the future. The university is starting its next recruitment cycle interviews and MVP champions have been asked to be involved in this process.

- **Keele University**

Maternity champions continue to be involved with input into the curriculum and any other events that we are invited to.

- **MVP meetings:**

We continue to hold bi-monthly meetings via Microsoft Teams and, as always, these meetings are well attended and initiate good, meaningful discussions. Quarterly feedback reports are presented and updates from Local Authority, Health Visiting and Midwifery are also given.

- **Collaborative working with Derbyshire Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (DMNVP):**

One of our champions explains how collaborative working with the DMNVP is going from strength to strength:

“I have been attending meetings with the Co-Chair of DMNVP, the patient and public engagement team and the patient experience team. We have discussed our engagement with service users, the strategies we have trialled and ideas for future engagement. The meetings have been really positive, as we shared ideas and thoughts to continue to promote both the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent MVP and DMNVP, to cover University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Trust (UHDB) together. We have a meeting planned for January and we are hoping to meet quarterly going forward”. – Fran Power (Maternity Champion).

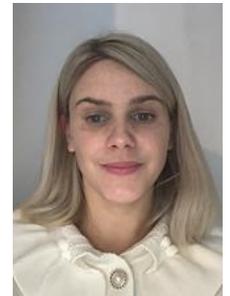
Here is a summary of the feedback from women who have birthed at UHDB:

“Overall, the women and their families have informed us that their experiences have been extremely positive, with many saying the care that they received was amazing from the midwives, doctors and other staff. Understandably, queries have been raised regarding current restrictions. However, after further discussions with these service users, they fully understand that this is due to a number of reasons including COVID-19 and staffing pressures. Ultimately, services users acknowledge that these decisions have been made to put both the health and safety of themselves and their little bundles as a priority”. – Fran Power (Maternity Champion).

Meet our new Maternity Champion, Rachel:

I'm Rachel, a mum of two based in Armitage.

I became a champion as my experiences throughout my pregnancy with my son last year left me feeling frustrated and like I didn't have a voice or place to air my experiences. When I came across the Maternity Champions programme I felt relieved that I could share my feedback and also be part of it to ensure that other families could be heard and action could be taken off the back of feedback – positive or negative.



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. In addition to the main providers, UHNM and UHDB, we are also keen to hear from people and their families who reside within Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent who may have birthed at hospitals such as 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 mothers 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:

"Everything has been fab since being admitted, the staff are wonderful, it was just getting here and managing expectations that has been the problem!"

"Thank you so much to all the wonderful staff who have looked after us these past couple of days on the delivery suite and MBC, the care we received was absolutely fantastic and couldn't have asked for a better birthing experience."

"I honestly cannot praise every single member of staff that I've been in contact with enough. Whilst the restrictions are difficult, I feel very lucky that this is where we had our baby because everyone is just amazing."

Four ladies met on the Maternity Champions COVID-19 support Facebook page. They had their babies together and have each given consent for the below picture to be shared. They said, “We all had such a great experience thank you”.



Our focus over the next few months

As we are still unable to visit face to face groups to engage with women and their families, 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.



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**