

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Maternity Voices Partnership: Annual Report 2019–2020

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1. Letter from the chair

This annual report covers the period from April 2019 to October 2020. However, we will not remember this as one period of time, but most certainly talk about a time “before, and after” Covid-19.

Before Covid-19, the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) held face-to-face meetings and undertook a range of engagement activities. I’d like to thank the professionals in our MVP and especially the MVP volunteers for their commitment and efforts. The MVP could not run without their input! Many thanks as well to the organisations in the local community who have supported the activities of the MVP by opening their doors to us. Importantly, the local people who shared their experience of maternity services deserve a big thank you.

If you or your family have used maternity care, you know what support and services will make a positive difference to people’s experiences.

Mothers, fathers and families – you are the experts on what was good and what could be better about your maternity experience. Thank you for taking the time to share your views. The MVP is committed to create opportunities to hear from as many as possible from you in the future and work together with you to make care for all women, birthing people and babies safer and more personalised.

Changes due to Covid-19 have had a significant impact on the way maternity services are delivered and received. I want to offer a word of support for all of the people who have been affected and hope you have found ways to treat yourself and others with kindness in these challenging times. Moreover, Covid-19 has disproportionately affected pregnant women from black and minority ethnic groups¹ and has highlighted the need for a focused approach to help reduce these inequalities. After the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, MVP meetings and face-to-face activities were paused, but the MVP’s online feedback channels remained open. We are now resuming bimonthly MVP Action Board Meetings online and restarting engagement activities, such as a bimonthly online listening events. Things are looking different, but the ambition of the MVP has remained the same:

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire MVP is here to support the voices of women, birthing people and their families and put them at the centre of the development of local maternity services.

Would you like to get involved? Please send us an email at contact@nottsmvp.co.uk.

–Nadine Otting

¹ Knight et al. (2020) Characteristics and outcomes of pregnant women admitted to hospital with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection in UK: national population based cohort study. *BMJ*, 369, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m2107>

2. Introduction

The present annual report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to end of October 2020 and gives an overview of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Maternity Voices Partnership, the work that has been undertaken in this period and the future plans.

3. About the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire MVP

3.1. What is the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire MVP?

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire MVP is a team of maternity professionals and lay people who work together to review and improve local maternity services.

Maternity Voices Partnerships (MVPs) are independent NHS working groups that aim to review and improve maternity services by putting the experiences of women, birthing people and their families at the centre. The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire MVP is multidisciplinary in nature and brings together professionals from organisations involved in maternity care and local women, birthing people and their families.

Professional members of the MVP include midwives from both Nottingham University Hospitals Trust and Sherwood Forest Hospitals Foundation Trust, representatives from the Clinical Commissioning Groups in our area, and representatives from Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council. Our MVP also involves representatives from Healthwatch Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, as well as representatives from charities and other organisations that support local families, such as Zephyr's and Small Steps Big Changes.

Last but definitely not least, we have a diverse team of passionate MVP volunteers who represent and reach out to local women, birthing people and their families.

The Provision of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire MVP is through a contract with Healthwatch Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (HWNN), on behalf of NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire CCG.

3.2. Why do we have a Nottingham and Nottinghamshire MVP?

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire MVP actively seeks out and supports the views of local people on how care during pregnancy, labour and birth, and after birth should look. The MVP empowers them to work in equal partnership with professionals to improve future maternity services so that these better meet their needs.

MVPs provide a platform for professionals in the maternity system to come together with users of maternity services and their families and work together to help shape the maternity services of the future. MVPs strive to take a co-production approach to working together.² Co-production builds on equal partnership of professionals, who are experts in their field, and lay people, who are experts by virtue of their experience, and involves their collaboration throughout the stages of service design, development and evaluation.

² For more information on co-production, see, for example, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/participation/resources/co-production-resources/>

As such, MVPs support the right of patients and the public “to be involved, directly or through representatives, in the planning of healthcare services commissioned by NHS bodies, the development and consideration of proposals for changes in the way those services are provided, and in decisions to be made affecting the operation of those services.”³ This commitment to service user involvement in the design, delivery and review of maternity care is also stated in policy documents, such as the National Maternity Review report *Better Births*⁴ that sets out the recommendations for how maternity services should be developed to achieve “safer, more personalised, kinder, professional and more family-friendly” care, as well as guidance for CCGs and the NHS⁵ and NICE guideline CG190⁶. Working with service users through a Maternity Voice Partnership to coproduce local maternity services is also one of the ten safety actions designed to improve the delivery of best practice in maternity and neonatal services⁷.

4. The work of the MVP in 2019–2020: Achievements, challenges and outputs

Achievements: Multiple MVP board meetings, completion of a diverse range of engagement activities, recruitment and involvement of MVP volunteers and chair; start of social media presence for the MVP.

Outputs: Healthwatch produced commissioned reports on the Walk the Patch and postnatal survey, which gathered the views of women and their families.

Challenges: improve MVP Action Board membership, maximise the potential of service users’ feedback to improve services, prioritise engagement with seldom heard groups and underserved populations, improve the effective use of social media.

4.1. MVP Meetings

In the period of April 1, 2019 to October 31, 2020, there have been three Action Board meetings (May 17, November 21, 2019 and January 23, 2020), as well as two Showcase Event meetings (March 2 and 11, 2020). MVP Action Board Meetings follow an agenda, are minuted and the minutes are distributed to board members for approval.

MVP Action Board meetings have included discussions on a wide range of topics and reviews of feedback received through our various engagement channels. We have had a range of people attend these meetings: midwives from both Nottingham University Hospitals Trust and Sherwood Forest Hospitals Foundation Trust, professionals from the

³ Department of Health (2015) *The NHS Constitution for England*, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england>

⁴ The National Maternity Review (2016) *Better Births*, available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/better-births-improving-outcomes-of-maternity-services-in-england-a-five-year-forward-view-for-maternity-care/>

⁵ NHS England (2017) *Patient and public participation in commissioning health and care: Statutory guidance for clinical commissioning groups and NHS England*, available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/patient-and-public-participation-in-commissioning-health-and-care-statutory-guidance-for-ccgs-and-nhs-england/>

⁶ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2014) *Clinical guideline [CG190]. Intrapartum care for healthy women and babies*, available at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg190>

⁷ NHS Resolution (2020) *Maternity incentive scheme – year 3*, available at <https://resolution.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Maternity-Incentive-Scheme-Year-three.pdf>

Clinical Commissioning Groups in our area, City and County Council, the Small Steps Big Changes programme, Healthwatch and Zephyr's, as well as MVP volunteers, including recent service users.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we cancelled our Showcase Event, which was planned for March 26, 2020 and paused MVP Action Board meetings from March 2020. MVP Action Board Meeting have now restarted online via Zoom in October 2020.

Moving forward, our ambition is to increase service user/volunteer membership of our MVP and fill gaps in membership, such as representation of obstetricians and the Healthy Family Teams.

4.2. Healthwatch contract

Healthwatch has provided commissioned support for the MVP for the period of September 1 to March 31, 2020 and September 1, 2020 onwards. Through effective recruitment, support, training and undertaking engagement activities, Healthwatch empowers local people and service users to get involved in the work of the MVP. In addition, Healthwatch has undertaken targeted engagement with seldom heard communities, produced surveys and reports and managed the social media of the MVP.

4.3. Engagement activities

With the active involvement of MVP volunteers and professionals in the maternity system, the MVP has completed a number of diverse engagement activities, which have included both online and face-to-face feedback gathering.

- Personalised care survey (68 responses)
- Survey poll on key themes for the MVP
This survey resulted in the following top three of topics: postnatal care, emotional support including support for bereaved parents and breastfeeding support. These key themes shaped the postnatal survey.
- MVP Launch Event in September 2019
- Walking the Patch survey (32 responses) in October and November 2019:
Healthwatch staff and MVP volunteers visited Nottingham City Hospital, Queen's medical centre and King's Mill to gather the 'live' experiences of maternity services from 32 women who had just given birth.
- Postnatal support survey (with a separate version for people who experienced loss) in December 2019 and January 2020 (54 responses):
Responses to the postnatal survey were gathered both online and in community settings. Healthwatch staff and MVP volunteers visited nine community settings to gather responses from women about the postnatal support they had received.

These engagement activities have shaped the focus of the MVP during this period of time and survey results have been shared with the relevant stakeholders for further action.

Moving forward, the MVP wants to prioritise engagement with people from seldom heard groups and underserved populations. The MVP also aims to maximise the potential of feedback from service users and their families in order to review and improve the services and to offer more opportunities for local people to directly share their views with the relevant professionals.

4.4. Healthwatch combined report

In June 2020, Healthwatch published the combined report of Walking the Patch and the postnatal survey for the MVP.⁸ This report sets out the findings of these two engagement activities and puts forward the following recommendations:

- Reduce waiting times at antenatal clinics and for scans
- Offer the option of home births where appropriate
- Increase the number of hospitals each woman is offered to give birth in
- Continue with the Hospital Chaplain service to support bereaved parents
- Increase support provided to partners
- Increase access to mother's medical history prior to appointments for relevant health professionals
- Provide greater signposting and information on postnatal support

4.5. Chair nomination

The MVP has recruited a new chair. Nadine Otting was successful in obtaining this post and attended her first MVP Action Board Meeting on November 21, 2019. From April 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020 the MVP was not supported via Healthwatch and during this time activities by the chair included, for example, support for a funding request for Healthwatch support for the MVP to the Local Maternity and Neonatal System Board, support with communications related to the Covid-19 response by the Trusts to women and birthing people, maintaining MVP social media and discussing any feedback received with the relevant professionals.

4.6. Postnatal and neonatal improvement workshop

MVP volunteers attended the postnatal and neonatal care improvement workshop day on January 14, 2020. This workshop enabled MVP volunteers to work together as equal partners with professionals from across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire maternity system to improve the outcomes and experiences of women, babies and families.

4.7. Social media and website

The MVP has worked on its online presence and is now active on social media. The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire MVP Facebook page has accumulated over 300 followers since its start in August 2020 and the Twitter account has gathered around 100 followers since its start in July 2019. In addition, a website has been founded for the MVP in October 2020. The MVP aims to increase its reach through these online channels and use them as an effective means of engagement.

⁸ Healthwatch Nottingham & Nottinghamshire (June 2020) *Maternity Voices Partnership – Walking the Patch and Post Natal Surveys Report*, available at <https://hwnn.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/HWNN-MVP-WTP-PN-support-FINAL-Version.pdf>

5. Future plans for 2020–2021

Anna Rutkowska, MVP project officer at Healthwatch Nottingham & Nottinghamshire has shared the following Healthwatch' plan the next 6 months (September 2020 – March 2021):

- Recruit and train volunteers – Social media support volunteers, MVP meeting representative volunteers, Engagement volunteers, Insight Volunteers
- Create and update the Notts MVP website and Newsletter
- Fill gaps in MVP Board membership ensuring we have representation from NHS services and also organisations outside of NHS, charities and service users representatives
- Run listening events and focus group on Main theme which is covering the experiences of families with restrictions in maternity services in Covid-19 pandemic.
- Link with seldom heard communities and ensure their representation on MVP Board.

These are the main aims for 6 months (September 2020 – March 2021) with a new theme coming in the second part of the “contract year” (March – September 2021). There might be some changes after our 6 months review meeting in March.