



whittington health maternity voices  
listening to parents:  
change through partnership



Whittington Health  
NHS Trust

# Whittington Health Maternity Voices Partnership

## Annual Report 2019-20

*Author: Roz Webb, Lay-Chair, Whittington Health Maternity Voices Partnership  
December 2020*



## Contents

Letter from the Chair	Page 2
The function of an MVP	Page 3
What we have we done this year	Page 4-5
<i>Review of plans from Annual Report 2018-19</i>	<i>Page 6</i>
<i>Future plans 2021</i>	<i>Page 7</i>
<i>Conclusions</i>	<i>Page 7</i>
<i>Appendix 1+2 - feedback</i>	<i>Page 8</i>

### **Letter from the Chair**

This year began with normality, and in March everything changed. It was imperative to keep up to date with the many changes, and to ensure that users' voices and needs were heard. As Chair I suddenly found myself attending numerous virtual meetings, with North Central London MVP and CCG, with Logan Van Lessen at the Whittington, with the other North Central London MVP Chairs and HOMs, pan London MVP Chairs, and National MVP Chairs, all trying to find a way forward in these challenging times.

I am proud to say that we had four key meetings, with some follow-up interim meetings, despite the circumstances. We moved onto zoom for May's meeting; our online meetings have been well attended, warm, lively and enthusiastic, with a diverse range of health professionals, teachers, and volunteers coming together to discuss positive ways forward that will benefit everybody. We have been joined by local parents who have shared their thoughts and ideas with us in a workshop, with the added bonus of bringing their lovely babies to remind us of what this is all about. My grateful thanks to all the wonderful women who facilitated the breakout rooms for the online meetings, ensuring that women feel that they are in a safe space and feel really heard.

We always place an emphasis on co-production, bringing together many voices who all respect each other and their work. Everyone is dedicated to improving the experience of women and their families around this exciting and vulnerable period in their lives.

It has been a real bonus that we now have functioning MVPs for all four NCL maternity units; we have worked very closely together this year.

I would like to thank everyone who attends and takes an interest in Maternity Voices. Your support is much appreciated.

My particular thanks go to Agnes and Victoria for all their support.

I very much hope to return to Archway Children's Centre in 2021.

We are always delighted to welcome new service users to the committee. If you have had a baby in the last three years at the Whittington, or have an interest in maternity and would like to be involved, we would love to hear from you. Our email address is

[maternityvoices.whitthealth@nhs.net](mailto:maternityvoices.whitthealth@nhs.net)

## **The Function of a Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP)**

An MVP is an independent, multi-disciplinary advisory body, made up of local parents, representatives and professionals. Our committee includes representatives from Haringey and Islington CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups), children's centres, HealthWatch, Home Start, midwifery managers, the NCT (National Childbirth Trust), BfN (Breastfeeding Network), Active Birth Centre, Birth Companions and doulas. At each meeting we have a number of service users who have used Whittington maternity services; some come only once and others return to further meetings. The Maternity Voices Partnership exists in order to plan, monitor, develop and improve maternity care for women, partners and families at the Whittington.

### **What we do**

We meet four times a year to discuss key issues for Whittington Maternity, from pre-conception through to antenatal care, birth and postnatal care and recommend changes and improvements where these are needed.

Meetings are held in Archway Children's Centre, N19 5HE, which is close to the Whittington and provides a welcoming environment for parents. This year three meetings moved onto zoom. Around 20-25 people attend each meeting, with around 60 people on the mailing list. Attendance on zoom has been excellent. Many of the 20-25 attend every meeting although some may only attend particular ones to give a presentation about what they do, for example. At least a third of attendees are user reps and we are joined for our workshops by around five to ten mothers or expectant mothers, and their babies, and sometimes partners each time.

This year it has not been possible to 'walk the patch' or attend baby clinics at Children's Centres to collect feedback. However, as many of our members work with pregnant women and new parents they also can provide a great deal of information about current experiences and feelings. We have links with 'seldom heard' groups and have user reps who attend meetings on their behalf. The MVP continues to work with Manor Gardens Bright Beginnings and also with Birth Companions who work with women facing multiple disadvantage.

The Chair liaises regularly with other MVP leaders on a national forum and is working closely with the three other North Central London MVPs, in particular on co-creating a birth preferences document.

We welcome anyone who wishes to share their work with us to come to talk at our meetings. The meetings are an excellent opportunity for networking and encouraging everyone who works or volunteers with women and their families in the perinatal period to work together.

## **What we have done this year**

### **In meetings**

At every meeting we have an hour to share and discuss 'headlines' and to hear from any local groups or initiatives, then we have an hour long workshop with parents on a key issue. February's meeting was at Archway Children's Centre, and then we moved to zoom with a slightly different format which is very much still in development as we learn from each meeting. Our zoom meetings have been as well attended by users as those at the Children's Centre, with around 7 parents each time. Being on zoom we were able to welcome some dads as well, who probably would not have attended otherwise.

In **February 2019** we heard about the current situation for breastfeeding support at the Whittington. We then had a workshop in which we heard about services users' lived experience of feeding support.

In **May 2019** we had an update from Bright Start and their work during the pandemic. We had a workshop in which we asked the open question of what people's experiences had been during the pandemic. We asked midwives and other HPs to join us part way through the meeting, due to their increased workload. They listened and responded to feedback and questions.

In **September 2019** we took the same approach as May, with a broad request for feedback and a Q+A session.

In **December 2019** we heard about the work of Health Visitors from Emily Anderson. The main focus of the workshop was asking about postnatal experiences, particularly at home, and antenatal and postnatal experiences of health visitors. We offered a 'buddy system' for users for 30 minutes before the meeting – users could go into a breakout room with a listener to be heard and reflect on their story. This proved very successful. We were delighted to welcome three women from the black and minority ethnic community to this meeting.

Following a break during the peak of the pandemic, the MVP is now running interim meetings again. Some of the more formal aspects of the meetings have been postponed whilst we have been on zoom as they did not fit with the meeting format. It was felt that the absolute priority was to give users a voice at this time and that the meeting should be also be adjusted to take into consideration the extra, heavy workload for midwives and other HCPs.

## **Other work in 2020**

Since the start of the pandemic I have been working with midwives and comms to keep the Maternity website up to date. I also worked to balance the needs of women and their families with the concerns and needs of HCPs at this time – a challenge which is greater than it has ever been.

- began induction of labour co-creation project which has been put on hold due to Covid
- attended London MVP full day workshop
- met with comms to discuss community engagement
- attended Better Births conference in Manchester
- since March, attending weekly then fortnightly meetings MVPs/ HOMs/ CCG
- attending regular London and National MVP meetings
- working with homebirth groups to improve communication
- working with NCL MVP Chairs on Choice and Personalisation workstream
- working with NCL MVP Chairs to co-create NCL birth preferences document
- regular liaison with consultant MW at Whit during Covid
- editing and giving feedback for maternity communications with users
- supported bereavement team to get lighting outside the Whittington for Baby Loss Awareness Week
- met with Director of Strategies, assistant director of estates, clinical director, director of ops, to discuss future build at Whittington
- attending regular Multi Agency meetings
- attending and presenting at Infant Feeding Strategy Group meetings
- ran workshop about use of language with Agnes Leger for Whittington HCPs (November)
- Telephone call with Mars Lord to discuss involvement of black and brown women in Whit MVP
- Attending regular antenatal education working group
- Attended conference – ‘Why don’t we hear the cry for help – removing bias from maternity’
- Attended BFI baby friendly conference
- Attended webinar – ‘Supporting women facing multiple disadvantage – towards a shared LMS approach’
- Attended webinar by Birth Companions – ‘women living with multiple disadvantages in NCL’
- Attended meetings to produce detailed ‘going home’ booklet
- Met with FGM expert for guidance on birth preferences document

## Review of plans from Annual Report 2018-19

The pandemic had a considerable impact on our plans. Whilst some plans are on hold, we did many other pieces of work that grew out of the current situation.

- consider ways to achieve a higher profile, possibly through social media – MVP work load has been significantly higher this year already – social media work needs extra hands and funds
- complete photographic project – on hold from Covid but hope to complete as soon as possible
- IOL working group to complete work – co-creation with users - on hold, will return to this in 2021
- create action plan following February development meeting – covid changed our plans
- work with fundraising parent and Whittington to develop bereavement support - on hold until a room becomes available
- continue to monitor 'quick wins' and other recommendations - done
- continue to work closely with local groups and users - done
- continue to reach out to seldom heard groups and hear their voices - done
- continue to achieve good numbers of parents attending the meetings - done
- continue to collect feedback at children's centres - on hold, will return to this in 2021
- carry out regular 'walk the patch' and '15 steps' - on hold, will return to this in 2021
- ensure rewrite/ reorganisation of website is co-produced with the MVP – reorganisation of full website on hold but MVP has had constant input into the language, tone and content of the covid-specific pages, and I have a close working relationship with comms
- ensure a clear policy is produced regarding wearing glasses/ contacts in theatre - done
- liaise with Birth Companions to ensure birth preferences sheet is completed – first draft completed
- continue to create unified information leaflets and posters across maternity - on hold, will return to this in 2021
- work with Birth Companions Lived Experience Team – done whilst funding was available

### **Future plans 2021**

Some of these plans will be dependant on covid restrictions being lifted.

- consider ways to achieve a higher profile, possibly through social media
- complete photographic project
- IOL working group to complete work – co-creation with users
- continue to monitor ‘quick wins’ and other recommendations
- continue to work closely with local groups and users
- continue to reach out to seldom heard groups and hear their voices
- ensure representation of a diverse range of users at meetings, through users and user reps
- continue to achieve good numbers of parents attending the meetings
- collect feedback at children’s centres
- carry out regular ‘walk the patch’ and ‘15 steps’
- ensure rewrite/ reorganisation of website is co-produced with the MVP
- ensure birth preferences sheet is completed and rolled out to all of NCL
- continue to create unified information leaflets and posters across maternity
- continue to work closely with all NCL units and MVP Chairs

### **Conclusions**

Whittington Maternity Voices Partnership is a strong and effective group. We feel very well supported and respected by HCPs at the Whittington and are grateful for their commitment and enthusiasm.

We have achieved a great deal this year, as shown in this Annual Report.

We look forward to an equally productive 2021.

Roz Webb, Lay Chair

*Thanks so much for inviting us to take part in the MVP - it's a brilliant thing you're doing. It felt like a very safe and supportive environment to share my experience and was all very cathartic. user*

*I have to go but thank you so much for this forum. I am so glad I switched for the Whittington as I feel that patients are being listened to ;). Can't wait to give birth there!  
Expectant mum*

*Thank you for chairing the meeting really well, Roz, and all you do to improve the services.  
Thank you! Breastfeeding co-ordinator*

*Just wanted to say a big thank you for allowing me to join the maternity voices meeting earlier today! – this was the first one I have attended and it was hugely insightful and valuable hearing about women's experiences, as well as hearing from the professionals in the group. HV*

*Beautifully chaired. NCT teacher*

*Thanks Roz for having me today. It was great hearing other birth stories and seeing how you are working to make things change! New mum*

*Thanks for having me today, it is such a good forum. Your suggestions for a different zoom format next time sound extremely constructive and very helpful. I did feel listened to and it was a warm and engaging environment. I mostly make the comments about engagement with a view to enabling extended reach for other mums, dads, partners who may hopefully join in future. Thanks for being so responsive. user*

*It's great to meet you and to meet such a broad range of people today. User*

*Thanks for the invite to the MVP meeting on zoom. I was really impressed with how it was run. Through doula circles I hear varying degrees of rage and happiness from them regarding MVPs across the country and feel very lucky to live next door to the Whitt! Doula*

## **Appendix 2 Feedback from language workshop for HCPs**

*Thank you so much for an excellent session this morning. Feedback from the group in the parentcraft room was very good. There was lots of lively discussion with the breakout groups which you probably didn't get to enjoy through zoom.*

*What a fab session! Thank you for putting it together. It was very slick on the virtual front and everyone seemed to get engaged. Such an important topic to address.*