

Croydon University Hospital Maternity Voices Partnership

ANNUAL REPORT April 2020 - March 2021

FOREWORD

This year has been challenging for the NHS, its service users, our MVP and its members.

In March 2020, COVID19 took centre stage across the world, and so the pandemic began. While a large percentage of the world's workforce closed for business, babies continued being born, pregnant people continued to need care and postnatal families continued to need support.

This report will look at the challenges faced by both Croydon's maternity services providers and its service users during this time. With a focus on sharing the highs and lows of developing our maternity services during a pandemic.

The goals our MVP had for the year were - in part - placed on hold, as our energy was diverted to support both the NHS and its service users during what has been a difficult year for all.

We are grateful to all our members, whose triumphs are celebrated and learnings acknowledged in this, our end of year report.

If you are reading this and aren't yet a part of our Maternity Voices Partnership, contact us at croydonmvp@gmail.com and find out how you can have your say in the future of Croydon's maternity services.

Warm wishes,
Bev and Sakina
Co-Chairs of Croydon University Hospital Maternity Voices Partnership

STARTING THE YEAR

The Elephant In The Room

The COVID19 pandemic meant that in April 2020 we started the new MVP year on our back-foot. It became clear quite quickly that we would have to pivot our priorities and provide the Trust and our service users with more support than ever before!

Social restrictions, service limitations and staffing reductions has made this year our most challenging yet! This meant that some of our priorities were either paced on hold or had to be reimagined to fit our new way of living.

Our Priorities (2020-2021)

- Increase Service User engagement with MVP.
- Include more service user voices and experiences in MVP meetings.
- Create a platform for parents to complete our Walk The Patch survey online, providing regular feedback on services for our MVP.
- Follow any action being taken to improve the Perinatal Mental Health pathway.
- Track developments within Croydon Health Care's BFI (Baby Friendly Initiative) Level 3 accreditation.
- Track developments within Croydon's Continuity of Carer (CoC) maternity pathways.
- Complete our "15 Steps" objectives - ON HOLD.

Later in the year, two more items were added to our priority list:

- Ockenden Report
- Addressing equity and inequalities in maternity care, relating to birthing people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

We are keen to build connections with communities that are harder to reach and/or seldom heard.

Our Meetings

In light of in-person meet ups being prohibited, all of our meetings this year were moved online, via Zoom. We are proud of all our members who adapted well to the new format of meeting online, and were patient with us through technical teething difficulties.

Due to the pressures of the pandemic, our April and June MVP meetings were cancelled in anticipation of no NHS representation. However, during this time MVP Co-Chairs and Maternity Leads maintained communication through regular phone calls and emails.

As well as being joined by more service receivers this year, we are happy to have had representation in some of this year's meetings from Obstetrics, Neonatal, SWL LMS (South West London Local Maternity Systems) and a fellow SWL (South West London) MVP Chair.

OUR PRIORITIES

Perinatal Mental Health

Due to the impact of COVID19, much of the work the steering group at Croydon Perinatal Mental Health Services started has been paused whilst the impact of the pandemic is dealt with.

When these are reignited, Croydon MVP looks forward to keeping a service user representative on the group, as we are aware that the pandemic will lead to a rise in the need for perinatal mental health services and the additional emotional pressure this has left many parents with.



Continuity of Carer

It has been wonderful to see the continued growth of the Continuity teams in Croydon.

We now have 4 Teams based at Croydon, with plans to launch another soon.

These teams are providing continuity of carer for women:

- With Type 1, Type 2 and previous gestational diabetes
- Planning a homebirth
- Planning to birth in the Lucina Birth Centre
- Caring for families in the North of the Borough.



Crocus Team cater for women who are planning a home birth in Croydon. They work from children's centres' in the North and South of the borough, as well as providing certain key appointments at home. They caseload women from point of booking, or take referrals at any point in pregnancy if you decide later on that you'd like a home birth. The team work on call to attend you when you go in to labour, and help you welcome baby in the comfort of your own home.



Nectar Team offer continuity of carer to Type 1 and 2 diabetic women, and those who have experienced gestational diabetes in a previous pregnancy. Based in antenatal clinic, Nectar midwives work alongside the diabetes in pregnancy team, providing antenatal, labour and postnatal care to ensure that Croydon's diabetic mums and babies receive the best possible care.

Of all the women booked onto a CoC pathway, the majority are receiving antenatal and postnatal care from their named midwife or buddy, and a member of the CoC team during labour/birth.

At our last meeting before writing this report, Croydon is reaching 90% CoC for antenatal and postnatal care on these pathways.

Intrapartum care can be challenging, but Croydon are reaching 40% for CoC, and work continues to raise these figures.

On a shift by shift basis and where possible, Team Leaders on the Delivery Suite and Lucina Birth Centre are relocating staff to match Leander and Lucina midwives with their birthing people when they arrive in labour.

Overall we are proud of Croydon's achievements so far and look forward to seeing how implementing more CoC Teams will improve care for the birthing people of Croydon.



Leander Team offer continuity to women in a geographical area in the North West of Croydon. Women are allocated a 'named' and a 'buddy' midwife at booking and all antenatal and postnatal care is provided at the Leander Rd clinic. There is one midwife from the team on shift at all times to care for women in labour, whether they chose to use the Birth Centre or Labour Ward to give birth.

Walk The Patch

After the initial suggestion of an online WTP / Voices in the community survey in 2018, we are thrilled that 2020 saw the Croydon Maternity Voices Survey go live on Survey Monkey.

Our first 3 months saw a gain of 27 responses, keeping this survey in line with our previous respondent numbers for WTP and Voices in the community.

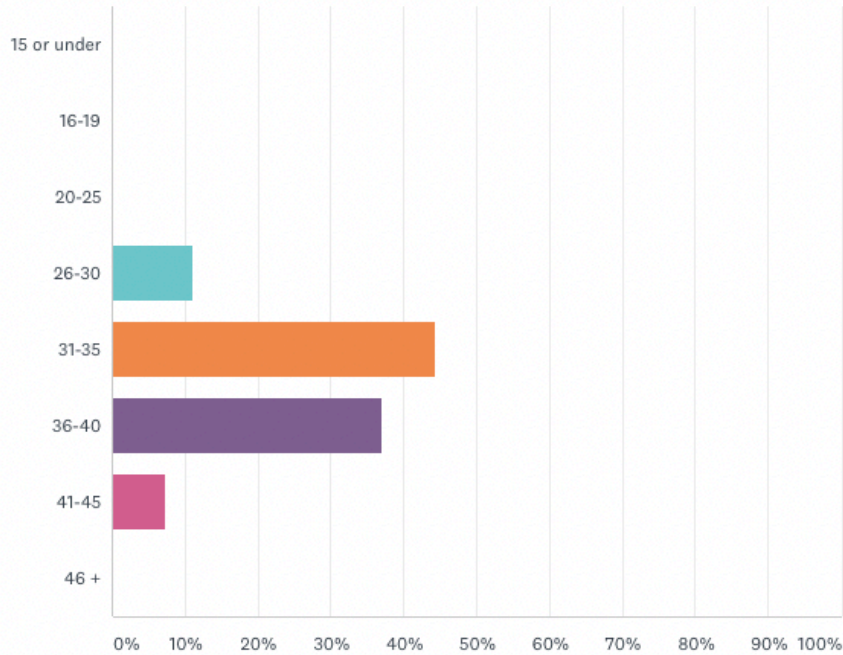
This new platform allows us to reach a wider audience through our online platforms, making collecting and collating the data simple and secure. Plus, there are options to have this survey in postnatal wards in an unobtrusive and language accessible way.

We are now able to look at this data and spot trends in the feedback provided. This will enable us to raise awareness of the voices in the community who are not being heard.

Here is a snap shot of part of our first report:

What age range are you in?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0

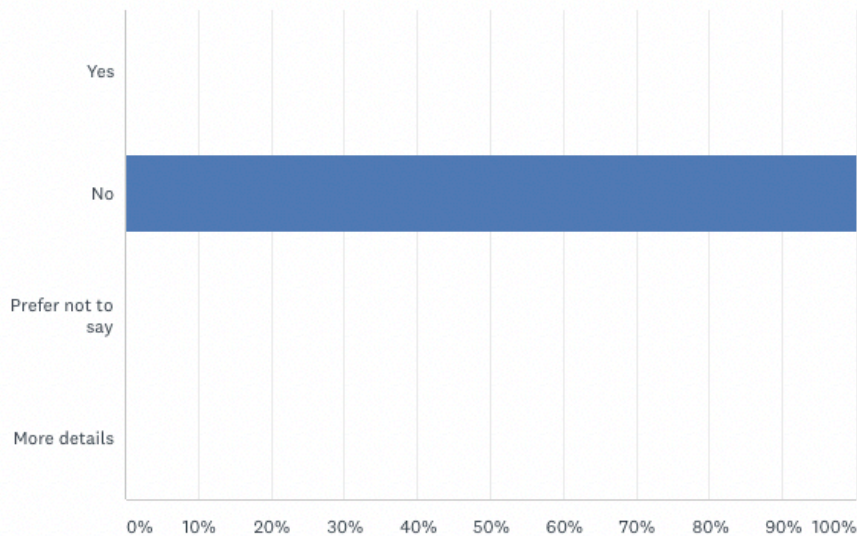


RESPONDENTS 27 TOTAL

- Equal division between 1st & 2nd time birthers.
- Majority of respondents were ages 30-40 and we have not heard from younger parents.
- 20 identified themselves as White British | 2 as Asian Indian | 2 as Asian Chinese, other respondents were Black British, Croydon, White European.
- No one identified as having a disability.

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 0



Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) Level 3

Since achieving Baby Friendly Initiative level 2 in 2014, Croydon Health Services (CHS) have been focussed on what is needed to achieve level 3. Due to the persistence of Croydon Health Services staff, funding has been granted for our application for level 3 Baby Friendly Initiative, which maternity units are now expected to obtain (NHS long-term plan). This is the highest level of accreditation and would be an exciting development for Croydon.

There is much work to be done, including monthly training for the remaining 35% of staff who are not already trained. There is also a need to ensure statistics of relevant information are reported correctly, producing accurate results. This is especially important for statistics around skin to skin and breastfeeding initiation rates, which - due to an IT discrepancy - hasn't previously been accurately reported.

We are proud to be supporting CHS as they strive to equip parents and their babies with the best start.

Ockenden Report

The Ockenden Report - released in December 2020 - contains the first findings and recommendations from the first review of maternity services at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust. This independent review is looking into the initial 250 cases of avoidable neonatal, maternal deaths or harm at Shrewsbury and Telford Trust, dating back over a decade.

To date, findings from this investigation have provided 7 key themes and learning that is to be implemented in all maternity departments across all NHS Trusts.

The report states that the LMS (Local Maternity Systems) cannot function effectively without family voices. Therefore it is imperative that service user choices are strongly and effectively represented at LMS level, through the MVP.

Other recommendations include pooling with other Trusts, to provide/receive objective feedback and overseeing of any investigations into serious incidents.

Findings from this report are heavily aligned with our MVP's objectives to increase service user voices within our meetings and developing true co-production between service users and the Trust.

One of the first action points from the Ockenden Report was to complete an assessment and gap analysis document, by February 2021. This document included 11 immediate actions on which the Trust had to provide information and assurances as to how these would be addressed.

Co-Chairs - Bev and Sakina - reviewed the document and gave feedback before it was submitted to SWL LMS.

Supporting the document is data submission. The LMS is to be presented with evidence that the actions identified are being service user and trust-led. This reinforces the importance of starting the meetings with service user voices, and reiterates how vital our Walk The Patch feedback is to this work.

15 Steps for Maternity

Due to the pandemic, we have been unable to fulfil a lot of our initiatives from the 15 Steps Event held in 2019. Some of our outstanding objectives are:

- Recruit a volunteer "greeter" for the Maternity Unit.
- Create a breakout area in the Labour Ward, for birth partners who need to step out of the birth room, but do not wish to leave the ward.
- Diverse welcome signs at the front of maternity entrances, reflecting the diversity of our community.

Once we are able to focus our attention back onto this project, we will continue to work through the objectives, with the hope that next years report will show these items completed.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Our Meetings

This year we have reinforced the importance of hearing service user voices in our meetings, by inviting a parent to share their journey into parenthood. Starting our meetings with a parent insights and experience of receiving care with Croydon Maternity Services provides focus for MVP members and places our service users at the heart of our purpose.

We are excited to be creating a space where service users are heard directly, consistently and safely. Keen to continue to reach out and hear a wider range of voices and have them represented at our meetings, we invite anyone who wishes to share their experience of Croydon Maternity Services, to contact us on croydonmvp@gmail.com.

This year, we have seen a dozen new parents attend our meetings. Year on year we have seen an upward trend of new parents joining meetings. Our agenda remains to increase these numbers and improve our ability retain those parents who have joined us previously, as this continues to be a challenge.

MVP and Parents Coffee and Chat

MVP Co-Chairs - Sakina and Bev - have been hosting MVP "Coffee and Chat" meet ups for parents. These informal meet-ups have benefitted both parties by creating space for the MVP to hear more service user voices, while providing an opportunity for parents to ask any questions they have about our MVP.

During our Coffee and Chat discussions, some birthing people/families have shared their personal maternity journey stories, prompting important discussions around many items that we have on our improvement plans, such as:

- Continuity of carer
- Personalised choice and care plan
- Equity within maternity services

It has also highlighted some areas of the maternity journey that - until now - have not been on our radar, such as care and support for families who's experience includes the need for neonatal care.



These discussions are important for us to build connections with our wider community, hearing a range of voices and supporting work streams where common themes occur.

We are excited to have been joined by many different services users this year. Some have attended our bi-monthly MVP meetings, some our bi-monthly Service User Coffee and Chat mornings, or both!

So far, 4 Coffee and Chat meetings have taken place. It is our intention to continue these meetings bi-monthly, helping create regular communication within our community.

For information on how service users can join our Coffee and Chat meetings, keep an eye out for events on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/croydonmvp) or email us (croydonmvp@gmail.com) to receive updates.

Co-Production

The dedication we have shown to increase communication with our community has opened a doorway of opportunity to start co-production with our service users.

A virtual call - lead by MVP Co-Chairs - saw parents give their viewpoint and reflect on a piece of work created by the Infant feeding Team at Croydon. Once the co-production process is complete, the information will be available to all service users.

This is an exciting development as we work towards true co-production between the Trust and its service users.

Our MVP and Social Media

Our social media platform has continued to grow and engagement with Croydon's community is improving.

As we move forward, our longer term plans for MVP social media page(s) include:

- Recruitment of a service user volunteer, who will support the MVP by creating posts and engaging with parents in our community as part of a peer to peer introduction to our MVP.
- Collaborating with Croydon Health Services (CHS) to create accurate, timely and evidence based information for parents regarding CHS services and parent's rights for choice and personalisation of their care.

We have already started sharing information and infographics posted by other CHS pages - such as the information on Continuity of Carer Teams - with an idea to create an MVP page that is a truly informative and collaborative platform that supports service users.

Happy Baby Community - The Doula Project

This year we are pleased to have continued to build relations with the Happy Baby Community, including hosting their results and findings presentation of their Doula Trial, which included families receiving care at Croydon University Hospital.

We would like to congratulate them on receiving funding to further this project for the continued improvement of emotional and physical experiences of birth for Asylum seeking birthers.

RECRUITMENT

Saying Farewell

In December 2020, Sakina Ballard expressed that she would be stepping down from her role as Co-Chair.

Since joining the MVP, Sakina has been a consistent driving force for the vision we had for Croydon MVP. Over the past few years, she has poured her energy into bringing some of our aspirations into being.

Although we are sad to see Sakina step down, she has helped shape our MVP into something that can only grow and thrive, and for that we are very thankful to Sakina for playing such an important part in our development as an MVP.

We wish her all the best with her next adventures!

New Beginnings

It was our aim to have a new MVP Co-Chair in place for the start of the new year in April 2021.

Previously - because of a lack of platforms and service user engagement - Croydon's MVP Co-Chairs have been recruited through word of mouth and with no formal induction or training. This time, we wanted to implement a more structured process of appointing a new Co-Chair.

First, the role was publicised via our social media platform and within our MVP meetings.

Having received initial enquiries from 5 individuals, Bev and Sakina held a "Meet the Co-Chairs" online meeting. This was an opportunity for candidates to find out what a day in the life of a Co-Chair looks like, ask questions about the MVP, and share their own enthusiasm for the role.

Following on from this, candidates were asked to express their interest in the role in writing, answering a few short questions. Finally there was an opportunity for the Maternity Leads to have discussions with candidates.

Due to start in April 2021, the new Co-Chair will be officially introduced in our first MVP meeting of the year on April 14th.

Sakina has kindly offered to remain a key cog in the running of the MVP, guiding and supporting the new Co-Chair in their role, ensuring they feel educated and confident as they settle into their new role.

FINANCES and FUNDING

In 2018, Croydon MVP was granted 3 years funding, in the sum of £7,000.00 per annum (April 2018 - March 2019, April 2019 - March 20 and April 2020 - March 2021).

These funds enable the MVP to:

- Host service user engagement events - such as the 15 Steps Event, held in 2019.
- Reimburse parking/travel costs to our service users who volunteer their time to attend MVP meetings and lead the development of our objectives.
- Remunerate a service user to upkeep our social media pages and engage with our community.
- Remunerate Co-Chairs, who dedicate at least 30 hours each month to the progression of the MVP and its work.
- Create and print materials that promote the MVP and/or its events.
- Host online materials, such as our Walk The Patch questionnaire.
- Host online meetings via a paid for platform.

In the years since funding began, it has enabled the dedication of time to the development of the MVP. In turn, this has seen the MVP grow in numbers and awareness of its existence, work that will continue to be pursued.

Unfortunately, this year Croydon MVP was faced with the challenge of operating for the first 10 months without receipt of its funding. This was in part due to a nationwide misallocation of monies, and later, confusion around invoicing.

Historically, funding has been tricky, however this year was a particularly low point, with MVP Co-Chairs not only working without pay, but personally funding the MVP so it could continue its work.

The objective of the MVP is to be led by our service users, engaging with families from all corners of our community, giving us diverse representation and hearing all voices. We are lucky to have had Co-Chairs in a privileged position that meant the continuation of the MVP's work was possible without funding, but raises the question of being able to recruit a diversity of MVP members if there are concerns over if/when their dedication and input would be valued and appreciated with swift remuneration.

In April 2021, a new period of funding will begin. Although we are yet to be advised of the sum of this year funding, it is our hope that the value of our MVP is recognised with timely payment.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR CROYDON MVP?

Training

Opportunities to continue to develop the skills of MVP members is something we will continue to focus on.

From training, mentoring and having handovers for the new MVP Co-Chair, including training offerings from National Maternity Voices, we are glad to see this being offered and developed for greater support of Chairs.

South West London Local Maternity Systems (SWL LMS) have also co-ordinated Cultural Competency training for MVPs for which Croydon will have 5 spaces for its MVP members. This is a key area of development and work for Croydon, as we look to address maternal outcome inequities.

Also in the pipeline is training for all South West London MVP Chairs, to strengthen and encourage them in their role.

Our Community

Next year we want to focus on those whose voice are not well represented, in the hope our MVP members will better represent the diversity found in our borough.

We are keen to build connections with communities that are harder to reach and/or seldom heard.

Expanding the diversity of our MVP will require us to first find service users from minority communities and build connections so they feel the MVP is a safe space for their voice to be heard.

How this work will be done is yet to be mapped out, but we feel this is a good next step for our MVP members and Croydon parents.

SUMMARY

While we may not have achieved everything we set out to do this year, we have to acknowledge the difficulties that have been faced, both professionally and personally. Recognising that any development of our maternity services during this time - no matter how small - is an achievement in itself.

We are proud to have played a part in the supporting of our community through the pandemic, working with and supporting our service users and maternity workers at a time that has been uncertain for all.

We would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication everyone has given to continuing our MVP journey, and hope that in the coming months we will see our number grow even greater.

As we continue to adapt to our changing world, we look forward to reviewing our MVP action plan. This will allow us to tick off those items already achieved, set plans to complete existing tasks and having discussions around what we want to prioritise next.

