



SOMERSET Maternity Voices

Working in partnership to improve maternity services

Impact report 2020-21 Celebrating coproduction



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Message from our Chair

Welcome to our annual impact report for 2020-2021. It's no secret that the past year has been challenging for all of us. Our service users have been affected by constant changes and restrictions, our healthcare professionals have been working under immense pressure, and the Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) has been affected too.

We have shared and championed your voices at every step, consistently prompting services to review and update their COVID-19 restrictions while also showing our understanding of the pressures that maternity care units have been working under to keep everyone safe.

I'd like to say a massive thank you to everyone working in our maternity, neonatal, and health visiting teams, for their hard work and commitment during the past couple of years. I'd also like to send a big hug and thank you to all our service users, who have had to be so understanding and flexible during their pregnancy and new parent journey - it's definitely not been easy and for many it was really not how they expected it to be.

The work of MVP has also been affected by the pandemic, particularly our engagement work, volunteer involvement, and feedback opportunities. However, I am immensely proud of what we have managed to achieve, despite the challenges.

I have continued to represent you at Somerset's Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) and Hospital Trust meetings, making sure that your expertise and perspectives are heard, respected, and valued at the highest level by those making decisions, and that your input is sought to help drive change and improvement in Somerset's maternity services.

In this year's impact report, we are celebrating the enormous breadth of our coproduction work and our involvement within the LMNS networks and reflecting on how this has and will help to improve maternity care in Somerset.

As we recover from the pandemic, it is more important than ever that we work together to learn from these challenging times. In the coming year, we will be recruiting more volunteers and getting back on track with our engagement work. We want to hear more of your experiences and views so that we can continue to help services adapt and move forward.

Donna Butland
Chair, Somerset Maternity Voices Partnership



Message from our Commissioner

The last couple of years have been a challenging time for the NHS, including maternity services. Working through a pandemic, trying to balance restrictions while coping with higher than usual levels of staff sickness, has definitely put pressure on services. Throughout all the pressure, the MVP have supported us while making sure that we never lose sight of what matters to Somerset families.

Keeping those that need our services at the centre of all we do is essential and I truly believe that working alongside our MVP improves our services in every way.

Our aim is to ensure those who need our maternity services are kept safe, get the support they need, and have the best possible experience. MVP members are extremely skilful in ensuring the voice they bring is the voice of the families, ensuring we understand what is important to our women, babies and families, and acting as critical friend when things are not as good as they could be. By having this input, we can develop and adapt services informed by what our families say they want and need.

I would encourage every person in Somerset who is using or has recently used our maternity services to be part of the MVP. All voices are important and we want to continue to improve our services to make them right for you. To do this, we need to hear about your experiences, it is great to hear the good and we need to know when we haven't quite got it right so that we can review and make relevant changes.

I can only thank Donna and her team for all they do and look forward to continuing our valuable working partnership.

*Becky Applewood,
Deputy Director for Women's and Children's and Family Health
Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)*



Somerset
Clinical Commissioning Group

About us

Our vision

To improve the experiences of maternity for women, birthing people and their families, through multi-disciplinary collaboration and co-production that brings service users' voices to the centre of planning and strategy.

Our purpose

To champion the voices of women, birthing people and their families, in the development of maternity services in Somerset.

Our approach

People's views come first – especially those who do not often have a voice because they have not been asked or included. We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference for you.

How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our service user representatives identify what matters most to people by:


- Visiting services to see how they work
- Running surveys and focus groups
- Social media review and interactions
- Going out in the community
- Working with other organisations.


Our finances

We are funded by Somerset CCG to support the work of the MVP. In 2020-21 we received a grant of £25,000 with additional income of £16,445.

- Total 2020-21 income £41,445
- Total 2020-21 expenditure £37,117

Our social media

 Facebook followers: 2,132

 Instagram followers: 636

 Twitter followers: 554

Prioritising diverse and minority voices

Improving the diversity of our MVP and the voices heard by our LMNS has been our number one priority since we started work in Somerset in 2019.

Multiple reports document inequalities in outcomes for women and babies from Black, Asian, and mixed ethnicity groups, those living in the most deprived areas, and those experiencing multiple disadvantages (e.g. [Better Births](#), [MBRRACE](#), [UKOSS Study](#), [NHS Long Term Plan](#)). We want to do more to facilitate better representation and involvement of all who use our maternity service in Somerset.

Building understanding and meaningful engagement

Three years on, we have made some progress, but we are still not where we want to be. We learnt early on that true, meaningful engagement with our community takes time, trust, empathy and understanding. We have spent time learning and educating ourselves on cultural awareness, racism, and unconscious bias, which we feel is vital before we begin to speak to people who previously have not felt listened to or understood and often feel that meaningful changes are not made.



Somerset's Maternity Equity Strategy





In 2021, a forum called 'Racial disparity in pregnancy and childbirth' was started in Somerset, made up of people from the NHS, MVP, and the Community Council for Somerset (CCS). The forum has brought together important conversations across our systems. The group has begun to look at engagement with women, birthing people and their families and, at our request, members of the forum are now sitting on the Maternity Equity Strategy board to represent our community.

Multicultural Maternity Voices

We are setting up a quarterly Multicultural Maternity Voices group for pregnant and new parents, to support and listen to our families from Somerset's ethnically diverse communities. We will continue to look for volunteer service user representatives to support this work.



Find out more about us and the work we do

-  healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/somerset-mvp
-  @SomersetMVP
-  @SomersetMVP
-  @somersetmaternityvoices

Coproduction: How we've made a difference

Coproduction is a highly effective way to engage and work with groups of people at the earliest stages of service design, development, and evaluation, to better understand local need and develop innovative solutions. This approach is built on the principle that those who are affected by a service are best placed to design it.

Throughout the year, we represented Somerset's maternity service users, who are experts by experience, on a vast array of coproduction projects that have helped to develop and improve maternity care at a local, regional, and national level (see examples below). We have also worked in equal partnership with those who commission and provide services (see pages 15-17 for information about the many strategic and policy making partnerships that we work with.)

Maternal Mental Health Service

The value of lived experience

In May 2021, we recruited eight volunteer service user representatives, with diverse experiences, to support and coproduce the new Somerset Maternal Mental Health Service (MMHS).

They have been involved with design and implementation of the service from day one. They participated in working groups and focus groups; reviewed forms and literature; sat on the interview panel for each of the MMHS roles (peer supporters, administration, psychologist and midwife); and they will continue to support us to review and evaluate the service as it gets up and running.

What our service users say

Lianne:

This seemed like a perfect opportunity to be able to contribute and ensure that my lived experience could help others, to salvage something positive from what was, at the time, a terrible experience of suffering from extremely poor mental health in pregnancy and the post-natal period. Everybody has been so engaged and passionate. Communications have been frequent, open, and honest, but more importantly, friendly and incredibly respectful... When we were asked to contribute there were some fantastic insights.



SOMERSET Maternity Voices
Working in partnership to improve maternity services

Your voice matters

Have you or your partner experienced:

- Fear of childbirth (tokophobia)
- Birth trauma
- Pregnancy or baby loss
- Mental health worries, during and after pregnancy?

We need your help to develop and improve maternal mental health services in Somerset

Join our focus group and help us design a new service in Somerset.

You will be paid for your time and involvement.
Applications by 24 April 2021.

Get in touch
For an informal chat and to find out more

somersetmvp@healthwatchesomerset.co.uk
07796 951047





Janet:

I hoped that I would be able to put our experiences and feedback to use, by sharing them to effect different pathways of care and experiences for others. Working with the MVP has been a fantastic experience. I feel that through the MVP, service user voices are well heard by the NHS and Public Health - it feels that the feedback is valued rather than being tokenistic.

Ellie:

I have experienced maternal mental health issues so I was keen to help develop the service that will help other women experiencing difficulties. I feel service user involvement is vital because we can use our personal experiences to exemplify exactly what is and is not helpful during these especially intricate emotional times around pregnancy, birth, and time with a baby.

Donna is a very good facilitator, because she helped us to feel valued and cared about, which meant that we trusted the process and were comfortable sharing our vulnerabilities. Debbie Bunce, from MMHS, was clearly very open to hearing what the service users said and often expressed thanks to us for our time and input. I was also involved with the interviews for posts in the maternal mental health service. Throughout the process my needs and thoughts were taken into account and I was given the same status as the other people interviewing.



Lucy:

I am extremely passionate about supporting new parents - I experienced a miscarriage before having my son and I did not feel well supported. I wanted to provide any feedback I could to help develop services.

Providing feedback and edits to written literature which will be used by people experiencing baby/ pregnancy loss has been brilliant. It's so important for people who have been affected to say what wording or information would have helped them and to ensure the right tone is being used. Being able to join meetings and provide feedback to senior staff has been good too - it feels like there's an opportunity for service users to actually be listened to! I feel proud to have helped shape some of the printed literature which is now in hospitals.



What the healthcare professionals say

Rose Firth, Assistant Commissioning Manager, Mental Health Team, Somerset CCG:

Somerset MVP were contracted to give the views of women and support the development of this service. Somerset MVP has been instrumental within the development of the MMHS. They have challenged when needed, and made significant changes, for example, the referral form to ensure that woman can give as much information that is needed as possible, and the way the referral form asks for this information.

The MVP Lead and members gave views and personal experiences to ensure our service is needs-led and of high quality. I sometimes feel that when setting up services, NHSE/I are too focussed on numbers attending. These numbers are people, who have suffered or are suffering. Somerset MVP does well to ensure the voice of the woman is heard at all times.

Debbie Bunce, Service Lead, Perinatal Mental Health Teams/MMHS:

The Perinatal Mental Health Teams have worked with the MVP as part of the development of the new MMHS and they have facilitated contact with women and other parents who have lived experience. The MVP representatives have really helped to plan and develop our services. The communication with the MVP has been excellent and they have been great at setting up and facilitating our multi agency coproduction meetings. Working with the MVP and listening to feedback ensures that the service we are providing is based on the actual needs of service users and provided in a way that people feel it is helpful. I hope that we continue to work closely in the future.



SOMERSET Maternity Voices
Working in partnership to improve maternity services

Your Voice Matters

Come and meet the team

- Somerset's Perinatal mental health leads
- The maternal mental health Psychologist
- The MMH Peer support worker
- Somerset's bereavement midwife

We need you to help us to make important decisions regarding the new Maternal Mental Health Service in Somerset

Please come and join our face to face discussion
@The Nurture Shed
8th December 10-12pm

Please get in touch to register for the event
Via our social media pages,
Email somersetmvp@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk
WhatsApp 07796951047

We hope to provide an online link to join the event if you are unable to attend in person

Get involved



If you have a query about a maternity service or where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone.

-  healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/somerset-mvp
-  somersetmvp@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk
-  07796 951047

Improving pregnancy and baby loss care

The Somerset NHS Hospital Trusts have signed up to implement the National Bereavement Care Pathway, which has been developed to improve the quality and consistency of bereavement care received by parents after pregnancy or baby loss. We have partnered with the Somerset NHS Bereavement Project Lead, to ensure that service user voice is driving changes in Somerset.

Lucy Blackmore, Bereavement Project Lead Midwife and Professional Midwifery Advocate, Yeovil District Hospital and Somerset NHS Foundation Trusts:

The MVP group are currently coproducing a new bereavement personal care plan as part of a quality improvement project. This is being developed from recommendations as part of the National Bereavement Care Pathway, but also following data from the pregnancy and baby loss care in Somerset survey that showed only 2.1% of participants of the survey received this plan.

The coproduction of the survey has provided a valuable resource to capture the views of many families in Somerset... aiding the direction needed in implementing the National Bereavement Care Pathway across Somerset and overall to help improve families' experiences. Thank you so much for all you do and for the MVP engagement.

SOMERSET Maternity Voices
Working in partnership to improve maternity services

my CARE
Somerset NHS Foundation Trusts

Your Voice Matters

Help us to design & produce our pregnancy and baby loss personalised care plan

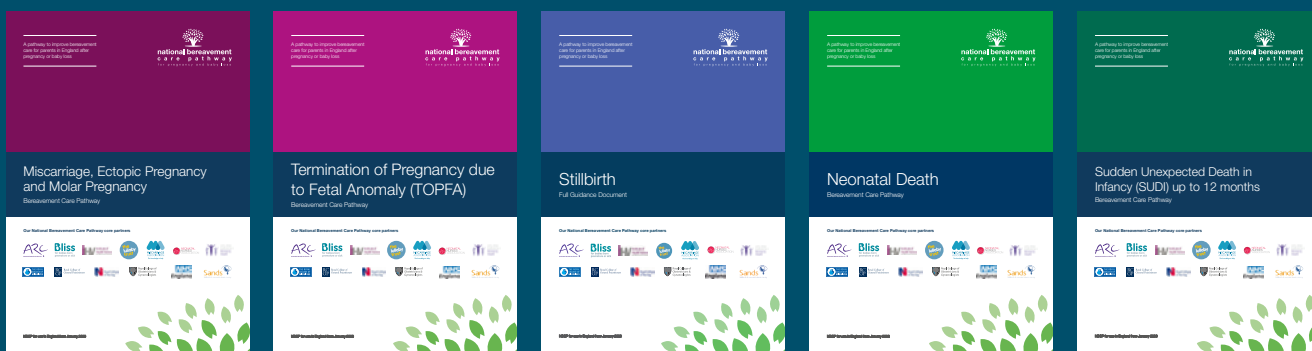
We are looking for volunteers to join our focus group, you will support the maternity team to coproduce a care plan that will be used with Somerset families who experience a pregnancy or baby loss. We anticipate there will be 2-3 meetings during the process.

The first meeting is online... Tuesday 18th January at 8pm

Please get in touch for more information or to join the group
Via our social media pages,
Email somersetmvp@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk
WhatsApp 07796951047

Find out more about the National Bereavement Care Pathway online: nbcpathway.org.uk.

The five Bereavement Care Pathways



Miscarriage

Termination of Pregnancy for Fetal Anomaly (ToPFA)

Stillbirth

Neonatal Death

Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI)

Mel's story: Somerset MVP service user representative for pregnancy and baby loss

Miscarriage followed by full-term baby loss

My journey to motherhood has been a bumpy road. In 2008, we experienced a missed miscarriage at eight weeks, receiving support from EPAC. We quickly became pregnant again, and in 2009 our son Finley died during labour at full term. His heart rate dropped, but an emergency cesarean was not able to save him.



Mel and baby Finley

Hospital bereavement care was a great help

We were able to spend three days in The Rowan Suite, a bereavement suite on the labour ward at Musgrove Park Hospital, where we made memories that we treasure as a family. We had photos, videos, a naming ceremony, hand and footprints, and we bathed, dressed and read him a story. The bereavement midwife supported us.

After a third pregnancy baby Toni is born

A year later, after a very stressful pregnancy with PTSD and anxiety, our rainbow baby Toni was born. We received care in each pregnancy from Musgrove Park Hospital.

Inspired to improve bereavement care for everyone

In the early days after Finley's death, we became aware that the care we had received was not always made available to parents locally or nationally, and at the time our experience was quite unique. We were inspired to improve bereavement care, using funds raised at Finley's funeral to start supplying memory boxes to the hospital. We set up a charity, Towards Tomorrow Together, to help other local families. Our services have grown over the years to include resources, and keepsakes, as well as funding doula support, holistic therapies, 1:1 support and support groups. We also offer training.

Working with Somerset MVP to influence positive change

I have always been keen to share my experience to inspire improvements, and value the work of the MVP. It is a fantastic way to bring together service user experience, with various professionals to achieve real change. Over the last year myself and Towards Tomorrow Together have become more closely involved with the work of the MVP, attending a variety of meetings including general meetings, maternal and perinatal mental health service meetings.

We were able to support the development of a [survey](#) that sought out the views and experience of parents affected by the death of a baby. I felt very strongly that this survey is an important tool to help to standardise care across the local hospital sites, and to highlight the (sometimes frequent) experiences of poor care that we as a charity often come across. We were able to offer helpful suggestions in

SOMERSET Maternity Voices
national bereavement care pathway
Pregnancy & Baby Loss Care in Somerset Survey
We are very sorry for your loss. If you feel able to share, we would value your comments on the care you received at this time. Your feedback will help improve existing services and develop new policies to meet the needs of affected families in the future. To access our short survey, please scan the QR code or type in the address below. Thank you.
www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/maternityvoicesomerset/
We appreciate this survey may be difficult to complete, so please do not feel you have to, if it doesn't feel right. If you would like any support during or after completing the survey, please contact Towards Tomorrow Together at mel@towards-tomorrow.com or Yeovil SANDS Snowdrop group at yeovil@sands.org.uk
Yeovil Hospital
NHS Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

highlighting possible resources that weren't yet being consistently offered to all parents. I have also been able to contribute to the development of a bereavement care pathway and care plan, meaning that this document is created more sensitively.

The involvement of the MVP in many new service developments is crucial. It has become apparent across many meetings that the needs and feelings of grieving parents are not always considered, understood, or highlighted. Letters, flyers, policies and processes, particularly throughout COVID-19, can have a significant impact on grieving and healing, long after the parent leaves maternity services. We need to take extra care not to cause more harm with insensitivity.

The MVP offers a way to amplify the voices of parents affected by the death of a baby. It is fantastic to see these changes happening, as it is something we tried to influence for a long time after Finley died, without much success.

Improving support for Black, Asian and minority ethnic families

In June 2020, NHS England asked local maternity systems to improve communications and provide better support for our Black, Asian and minority ethnic families.

The LMNS were asked to coproduce and implement an operational policy with their MVP and to reach out to Black, Asian and minority ethnic families with tailored coproduced communications. You can read the full report here: [Communications toolkit for local maternity teams to improve communications with Black, Asian and minority ethnic women](#).

We coproduced the operational policy and created leaflets with the LMNS. It was important to us that the information was friendly, easy to read and had specific information about care and where to go for help. The [leaflets were translated](#) into 20 different languages and given to all Black, Asian and other ethnic minority women being looked after in Somerset and shared widely within our networks.



Healthy Pregnancy Project

We worked with our LMNS Public Health Midwife this year developing communication materials to support their Healthy Pregnancy Project and guide their engagement work with service users.

Kate Beaumont, Somerset LMNS Public Health Midwife

I came into the post in July 2021, during the pandemic. It was a challenge to take on a new role when most non-clinical staff were still working remotely and building new working relationships was a real challenge. Donna and the MVP were involved from the earliest opportunity, at my interview! When we met later, she explained the work of the MVP and how we could work together on the various projects.

Prevention and transformation

The majority of my work is around the prevention agenda and closely linked with Maternity Transformation Programme and the NHS Long Term Plan. Much of this includes working collaboratively with the MVP and listening to the voices of our service users; the MVP allow us to make these valuable connections.

Smoking in pregnancy

The MVP has been involved in the coproduction of communication materials for the Smoking in Pregnancy campaign. Together, we are currently looking to engage service users in focus groups and to gather feedback on why women and families choose not to engage with the smoking cessation services and how we can make the service more accessible or improve messaging. We have found this a real challenge but through discussion we can come up with ideas and Donna has great links in the communities we work with and other voluntary sector organisations.

Insight feedback and a different perspective

I have been included in the MVP meetings and this is has been brilliant, as service users are very open and honest with their feedback, and when we were discussing the healthy pregnancy pathways they gave some insightful feedback that can be used going forward. Donna is able to bring a different perspective to the work we do and adds a different direction to some of our discussions. She is able to challenge our thinking as a group on occasion and enables us to step outside of our 'health professional' view.

There will be some challenges ahead, as I am particularly keen to try to engage with those communities we find hard to engage. But, with open communication channels and being open to new ideas, I am confident we can achieve some great work together in the coming months.



Share your views with us

Tell us about your experience with a maternity service, good or bad, and share your feedback. Somerset MVP is here for you.



healthwatchesomerset.co.uk/somerset-mvp



somersetmvp@healthwatchesomerset.co.uk



07796 951047

Influencing change at a strategic level

Gathering feedback and engaging with the public is an important part of what we do. However, the work that sets us apart from other patient involvement groups is the coproduction and representation we undertake at a higher strategic level alongside our maternity services workforce.

This area of our work has developed significantly, and our Chair now sits on many planning and decision-making boards and as well as representing maternity service users on the LMNS board and local projects.

Donna Butland, Chair, Somerset MPV:

Over the past three years, I have worked hard to build relationships and champion the value of service user involvement within our maternity networks. I am now able to represent service user voices in multiple ways, in the most important places, to healthcare professionals. Our NHS and public health teams now value the experience, point of view and voice of the service user in all they do and look to include Somerset MVP at every stage.

Working in partnership to achieve positive change

Last year, the Chair worked in partnership with maternity and health care professionals through the following meetings, working groups and projects.

Somerset boards, strategy & workstream meetings

- LMNS Programme Board
- LMNS Executive Board
- LMNS Safety Review Board
- Ockenden Review
- Maternity Equity Strategy
- Perinatal Strategy Group
- Infant Feeding and Nutrition
- Somerset NHS Foundation Trust BFI Gold Sustainability
- Prevention workstream
- ICON Strategic Group
- Neonatal workstream



Infant Feeding and Nutrition

Liz Gunn, Infant Feeding Team Lead, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust:

The MVP are very much part of the Gold UNICEF baby friendly strategy and able to offer guidance and the users views on the baby friendly standards that impact staff and families alike. The MVP Chair and her colleagues have been able to feedback to the team on families experience of the postnatal environment, visiting arrangements, the structure of the infant feeding team and community support. The MVP are part of the infant nutrition strategy group that meet bimonthly and throughout the year.

Hospital Trust meetings

- Perinatal Mortality Review Tool
- Maternity & Neonatal Governance Guideline Ratification
- ATAIN (Avoiding Term Admissions into Neonatal Units)
- Obstetric Intervention
- Maternity Risk Management
- Perinatal Morbidity and Mortality
- Labour Ward Council
- MatNeo Walkabout
- CNST (Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts) Incentive Scheme
- Saving Babies Lives

Perinatal Mortality Review Tool (PMRT)

Zoe Parish, Governance Lead Midwife, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust:

We have recently started inviting Donna as MVP representative to our PMRT monthly meetings. This input has been incredibly beneficial as it has provided service user perspective upon our maternity care services, as well as bringing ideas to the table on how we can overcome challenges and make improvements.

Specific projects & new services

- Somerset MMHS
- Plymouth University (student curriculum & blended learning)
- Maternity Digital Working Group
- Somerset Perinatal Mental Health
- Civility Saves Lives
- Musgrove 2030
- Musgrove MatNeo Staff Star Awards
- Implementing the National Bereavement Care Pathway
- Public Health (healthy pregnancy & stop smoking services)

Somerset MMHS

Emily Hutt, Public Health Promotion Manager, Somerset County Council:

I have been in several meetings where there is MVP representation. There have been a number of broad conversations relating to MMHS and some discreet pieces of work that contribute to the wider agenda regarding maternal health and wellbeing. Having user voice representation and MVP can at times offer insight into how we are doing as a system, and what may be required so that the system is well functioning for service users.

Plymouth University curriculum & learning collaboration

Heather Hopper, Associate Professor of Midwifery & Deputy Head of School of Nursing & Midwifery, Faculty of Health, University of Plymouth:

Representation from the MPV has contributed to the Sept 2021 curriculum design, encouraging an individual-centred approach to maternity care, promoting personalisation and continuity of care alongside safety of mothers and babies. As a result, our new third year modules have a holistic focus on complex maternity care rather than a 'complications' focus. Students are also encouraged to engage with their local MPV, and there is a MPV representative on the Midwifery Programme Committee at the University of Plymouth.

Maternity Digital Working Group

Victoria Parsons, Digital Project Manager, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust:

Listening to patients experience of maternity systems and what they would ideally like to see from a maternity electronic health record has been beneficial for me going forward in the countywide digital maternity project.

Local working/task & finish groups	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Start • Somerset Antenatal Offer Development Group • Perinatal Peer Support & PNMH Pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Breastfeeding • Racial Disparity in Pregnancy & Childbirth Forum
Working with other services, organisations & charities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health & Health Visiting Services • Early Help Strategic Commissioning Board • Healthwatch Somerset • Somerset CCG, Engagement & Advisory Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Council for Somerset • Home-Start • Local parent support & information groups • Mindwave • Care Quality Commission

Maternity Transformation

Steph Larcombe, LMNS Maternity Transformation Midwife:

Working closely with the MVP, women and families have been able to share their experiences of their maternity journey, to shape and change services they access. The involvement of MVP peer review groups to develop the MMHS and Bereavement Care Pathways was hugely successful, and a concept we hope to continue in all of our areas of service development. The MVP have been instrumental in the production of many leaflets, letters and social media campaigns, ensuring through this coproduction that information is in a format that is suitable for all. We continue to work hard with the MVP to achieve Ockenden compliance, and on our Somerset wide equity strategy. The transformation of maternity services is high on the national agenda and I look forward to the next year of working alongside the MVP to ensure we deliver safe and family centred care.

Regional (South West)	National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black, Asian & other minority ethnicities working group • Perinatal & Infant Mental Health • Coproducing Personalised Care • Patient Safety Network Leadership meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Maternity Voices Chair meetings • Birthrights 'Visitor Restrictions' event • NHS England & Improvement Rural Network
Training & self-development	Interviewing panels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Competency • Gender Inclusion • Gypsy & Traveller health (CCG) • LBGT in health services (CCG) • Quality improvement training • Safeguarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health Midwife • Bereavement Project Lead

Our team

MVP service user committee

We are supported by two Vice Chairs, a Volunteer Coordinator, two Social Media Representatives and 12 Service User Representatives, who help us to review and coproduce strategies, services, and communications. Most importantly they help us to find out what matters to you and your ideas for change.



Amber, Vice Chair

Areas of interest:

Working across localities
Home birth
Infant feeding
Peer support

Get in touch to share your feedback:

amberstrongdoula@gmail.com

I work closely with the Frome and Bath localities because our areas border and a lot of the families we work with engage with maternity services that overlap and integrate MVPs. I am a pregnancy, birth and postnatal Doula and also volunteer as a breastfeeding peer supporter. Ensuring families are listened to and aware of their rights is hugely important to me. We have a lot of work to do but collaborative conversations are a good start!



Clary, Vice Chair

Areas of interest:

Pregnancy care
Labour and birth
Young parents
Maternity care in rural areas

Share your feedback:

clarysomersetmvp@gmail.com

I am a mother to our blended family of five pretty much grown-up children now. I have lived and worked within Somerset my whole life and value all that it has to offer, while having a broad understanding of the issues that can arise within a rural county out on a limb. My enthusiasm and interest in antenatal, postnatal care and supporting young families has stemmed from my own experience as a young mother within West Somerset. This has further developed through my role as support worker with a charitable organisation and training to offer The Real Birth Workshop, becoming a Hypnobirthing educator and training as a birth and postnatal Doula. I love the idea that I can provide a platform to allow parents to have a voice about their experience within the maternity care of our county.



Jenny, Volunteer Coordinator

Areas of interest:

Labour and birth
After birth care
Infant feeding
Pelvic health care

Get in touch to volunteer:

jennysomersetmvp@gmail.com

I've been involved with Somerset MVP for nearly three years but have recently taken on the role of volunteer coordinator. I will be actively recruiting new volunteers and looking after all our brilliant current service user representatives to make sure we can provide as much feedback as possible to maternity services and ensure people's views and experiences are heard.

I have two children who have just turned three and five. I wanted to get involved following the birth of my daughter so that I could use my skills, experience, and enthusiasm to help other families have the most positive experience they can, whatever contact they have with maternity services in Somerset. It's been brilliant to be a small part of the journey the MVP has been on and I'm really pleased to continue to be involved.



Dani, Social Media Representative

Areas of interest:

LGBTQ parents
Pregnancy care
After birth care
Partners and supporting people

Get in touch via our social media or email:

somersetmvp@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

I gave birth to my first child in August 2021, my little daughter is named Winnie. My pregnancy and labour were full of anxiety and negativity from the start. Our fertility journey was emotional, financially demanding and time-consuming. I developed gestational diabetes and was in hospital frequently for reduced movements. I had a failed induction and emergency caesarean, all of which is my reasoning for working with Somerset MVP - I want to give feedback and produce positive changes in those areas.

I found the lack of information on fertility treatments, pregnancy/labour really frustrating. There were no signposts to local groups especially during COVID and nowhere where I could read feedback or birth stories from people in my local hospital. As well as sharing useful information and trying to get service users involved, I'm able to offer my feedback of the maternity unit in meetings. I would love to see changes in how language is used from medical professionals in relation to same sex pregnancies, GDM & post C-section communication.

One thing I noted throughout was the lack of training midwife's and consultants have on 'fertility babies'. I was frequently questioned about the 'dad' (rather than donor), who was 'mum', or my 'friend' (my wife) needs to leave the room, even not knowing what the actual medical procedure entails or 'why didn't you do it properly' and pay, all of which set a negative experience from the eight week midwife appointment. A communication and language change is very much needed in regards to basic terms.



Millie, Social Media Representative

Areas of interest:

Pregnancy and baby loss

Neonatal

Labour and birth

Infant feeding

Get in touch via our social media or email:

somersetmvp@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

Hello, my name is Amelia, but most people call me Millie. This is me and my little one, Isabella, but we all call her Bella. Bella is currently 15 months old and has completely changed my life.

I fell pregnant with Bella in February 2020 after suffering a miscarriage in December 2019. Naturally I was devastated when I had a miscarriage and my experience of this was met with a doctor brushing me off like it was just one of those things.

When I was only eight weeks pregnant, we were forced into lockdown due to COVID. This meant my maternity experience was very different to what many of my friends had experienced. Experiencing pregnancy after loss is already incredibly anxiety inducing but then to have to go to my appointments and scans alone was just awful. Luckily, I had an incredible midwife, and all my scans were met with good news only.

The rest of my pregnancy was fairly straightforward until I had to have a growth scan at 41 weeks which showed baby was measuring small. As I was already a week overdue and we had no other growth scans to compare Bella to, it was decided it would be worth inducing me. Knowing what I know now, I wish I had listened to my gut instinct of allowing my body to go into labour naturally but being a first-time mum, I listened to the professionals. Thankfully for me I did end up going into spontaneous labour but as I was already in hospital awaiting my induction, my home birth plans were not to go ahead. My labour was very quick, and I had Bella one hour after my labour started. All in all, I had a fairly positive experience throughout my pregnancy and labour, and I can't thank my midwife enough for being so amazing.

I decided to become a volunteer for Somerset MVP as I would love for many other pregnant people to have a great experience and feel empowered when it comes to birthing their babies, ensuring they know that the decisions are their own and they are in control, nobody else. I also want to ensure people who have suffered loss are looked after appropriately. So far, I am really enjoying my time as a volunteer and love that I am a part of making pregnant people's maternity experience better. That to me is incredible in itself.

This year our volunteers have:

- Helped support our day-to-day running
- Listened to people's experiences to help us understand which areas we need to focus on
- Supported the running of our social media pages
- Sat on the interview panels for the MMHS Psychologist, Peer Supporters, Midwife and Administration Assistant
- Reviewed referral forms for MMHS
- Reviewed letters to service users
- Reviewed Musgrove and Yeovil Hospitals maternity websites
- Designed personalised care plans
- Designed the baby & pregnancy loss survey
- Designed the baby & pregnancy loss care plan
- Acted as service users for staff training
- Reviewed hospital trust's maternity guidelines.

Become an engagement volunteer

This year we recruited a Volunteer Coordinator to recruit and support volunteers and to coordinate our engagement work. We are looking for volunteers who have used maternity services in the past two years, to help gather people's feedback. We hope to recruit people with an interest in a specific area of care, including:

- Pregnancy care (antenatal)
- Labour and birth
- After birth care
- Neonatal
- Perinatal mental health
- Partners and supporting people
- Pregnancy and baby loss
- Preconception
- Infant feeding
- Pelvic health care
- Gypsy and Traveller voices
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic voices
- LGBTQ parents
- Young parents

Our engagement volunteers support us to gather feedback in the community and online. For example, at groups they already attend, at baby and parent groups, coffee shop meet-ups, or by organising online focus groups. As a volunteer, you can do as much or as little as suits you, and your support really makes a difference.




Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch.

 healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/somerset-mvp

 jennysomersetmvp@gmail.com

 07796 951047

Our plans for next year

Maternity Equity Strategy

In September 2021, NHS published the [Equity and equality: Guidance for local maternity systems](#). MVPs have been asked to coproduce the local plans, support engagement and be part of the board that oversees the maternity equity and equality work. The maternity equity work will form a large part of our work plan for the coming year.

You can find out more here: england.nhs.uk/mat-transformation/improving-equity-and-equality-in-maternity-and-neonatal-care.

Ockenden review of maternity services

Emma Savage, Deputy Director of Quality and Nursing, Somerset CCG:

I have been collaborating with Maternity Voices Partnership in the coproduction of the Maternity Equity Strategy. While this document is still in development, I feel we are really getting to the heart about what is important to future and new parents here in Somerset. I have also been exposed to what some of the barriers are, particularly if you are new to this country and English isn't your first language. Together, we are starting to come up with some practical ways to improve the visibility and access of our maternity services. It feels like we are on an exciting journey ahead as we engage with key communities in Somerset.

In December 2020, NHS hospital trusts were advised of the [urgent actions required](#) following the [Ockenden review of maternity services](#). Action priority two requires services to 'listen to women and their families', stating that services must be able to: 'Evidence that you have a robust mechanism for gathering service user feedback, and that you work with service users through your Maternity Voices Partnership to coproduce local maternity services.'

We have been working with our maternity units to coproduce and implement the actions from the Ockenden report, and we will continue with this work in the coming year.

The MVP voice
is at the heart
of our maternity
transformation
in Somerset.



Hayley Peters, Chief Nurse, Yeovil District Hospital and Somerset NHS Foundation Trusts:

The perspective shared by our MVP brings the lived experience of women and families to the forefront of our strategy.

We would expect our MVP to constructively challenge and advocate for the women and families they represent, but this challenge is always coupled with a genuine understanding and compassion of the issues facing our midwives. This means that any feedback is respected and valued by all and our starting point is always - how can we work on this together?

Our MVP relationships are critical to us and we would like to thank Donna and our MVP peers for their contribution over the past year.

Sallyann King, Director of Midwifery, Yeovil District Hospital and Somerset NHS Foundation Trusts:

As a Head of Midwifery/Director of Midwifery, hearing the voice of the pregnant people and collaborative working with MVP is integral to maintaining a safe and effective maternity service. The last two years of working through the Pandemic, being able to evidence safe care for the Maternity Incentive Scheme and meeting the seven 'IEA's of Ockenden have been well supported with Donna and the MVP. They have provided a great conduit for timely communication about service pressures and user needs, ensuring voices are heard and actions are taken. The MVP have supported the coproduction of frequently asked questions, ensuring appropriate, timely response in non-medical language. They have raised awareness and challenge to working assumptions and driving service change in response to the user voice. As a result of this, the acute site in Taunton now has a purpose-developed sonography suite where couples can safely attend together, a positive move from a previously challenged footprint. There is growing plan of coproduction with the MVP and an increased representation at Trust forums and safety walkabouts. It is an exciting and challenging time in maternity services with the Maternity Transformation Agenda and in Somerset the pending merger of the two NHS Trusts to become a single entity. I am excited to be part of the leadership team who will be working with Donna and the MVP to align Somerset maternity services to be safe and equitable and truly meet the needs of the diverse Somerset population.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who is helping us put people at the heart of maternity care across Somerset, including:


- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us
- All of our amazing volunteers
- The voluntary organisations that have contributed to our work
- Our partners, including Somerset maternity healthcare professionals, Somerset CCG, Somerset health visitors and public health professionals and every member of the LMNS Programme Board.

Contact us

 healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/somerset-mvp

 somersetmvp@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

 07796 951047

 c/o Healthwatch Somerset, Woodlands House,
Woodlands Business Park, Bristol Road, Bridgwater, TA6 4FJ

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:
somersetmvp@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

You can download this publication from healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

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The registered office is at Unit 2, Hampton Park West, Melksham, SN12 6LH.