



SOMERSET

Maternity & Neonatal Voices

Working in partnership to improve maternity & neonatal services

Annual report 2024/25



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You can download this publication from evolvingcommunities.co.uk/somerset-mvp

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Message from our Lead

It's been another very busy year for Somerset Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP). Over the past 12 months, we have continued to listen to, amplify, and represent the voices of women, birthing people, partners, and families across Somerset, ensuring that their experiences help to shape maternity and neonatal services. We are now in our 7th year of running and we are well and truly part of the team at the Trust!



This year has reinforced just how important this work is. People and families have shared honest, vulnerable feedback about their care, which is immensely valuable. We have heard about what is working well, where people have felt supported and listened to, and also where services have felt stretched or experiences did not meet expectations. Holding space for all these things, both positive and challenging, remains at the heart of our work in the MNVP.

Throughout 2024/25, we have engaged with the community in a variety of ways, working to reach voices that are not often heard and to reflect the diversity of experiences across our rural county. We have continued to collaborate closely with system partners, using lived experience insight to inform discussion, challenge thinking, and support meaningful improvement. Co-production has remained a central principle of our work, and we have seen ever-growing recognition of the value that service user voice brings to decision-making in maternity and neonatal settings. We have also been working with the Trust to support the three year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal care which you can read more about at: england.nhs.uk/publication/three-year-delivery-plan-for-maternity-and-neonatal-services

This year has also brought its challenges. Like many parts of the NHS at the moment, maternity and neonatal services continue to operate under immense pressure and need for change. It is within this landscape that the independent voices of MNVPs are particularly vital, as they provide constructive challenge, celebrate good practice, and support learning and reflection across systems.

I would like to truly thank everyone who has shared their experiences with us this year. It takes time, trust, and emotional energy to speak about maternity and neonatal care, and we are deeply grateful to all those who have contributed. Thank you also to our partners, colleagues, and volunteers for their ongoing commitment, openness, and collaboration.

As we look ahead to 2025/26, Somerset MNVP remains committed to inclusive engagement, honest feedback, and meaningful co-production. We will continue to work alongside families and professionals to ensure that voices are not only heard, but acted upon, and that maternity and neonatal services across Somerset continue to learn, grow, and improve. We are so proud of our Team!

Dylan Perry

MNVP Trust Lead, Somerset Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership

About us

Somerset MNVP is commissioned by the Somerset ICB to fulfil its responsibility to involve service users and communities in maternity and neonatal services.

Our vision

Inclusive, safe, personal and kind maternity care for everyone in Somerset; designed, implemented and evaluated in partnership with the communities that receive the care.

Our purpose

To ensure service user voice is at the centre of decisions and to provide insight and oversight to improvements, quality and safety of services. We also provide strategic critical friendship to the LMNS.

Our approach

People's views come first – especially those who are often marginalised or ignored by institutions and systems. We believe in transparency, openness and co-production. We positively challenge, question and support the development and oversight of maternity and neonatal services by raising the voices of service users and supporting them to be involved.

How we find out what matters to you

We are always listening. We want to involve as many people as possible in our work and to hear from a wide range of voices and communities from across Somerset. Our team uses many different ways to engage with the public, including:

- Attending events in the community
- Sharing our **Have your say** survey
- Handing out branded merchandise and business cards
- Having notice boards up in the hospital and community wards
- Displaying our banners in the hospitals
- Using social media (we had 479 new followers on Facebook and 120 on Instagram last year)
- Having both a maternity and a neonatal WhatsApp committee to co-produce projects with. Last year 12 new volunteer reps joined our WhatsApp MNVP committee.

Find out more and get involved

- 📍 evolvingcommunities.co.uk/somerset-mnvp
- ✉ somersetMVP@evolvingcommunities.co.uk
- f facebook.com/SomersetMVP
- 📷 instagram.com/somersetmaternityneonatalvoice
- X x.com/SomersetMVP
- 📞 07767 914952



Our team

With the addition of the wonderful Lyndsay, with her valuable lived experience as a neonatal parent into our team, we found that neonatal voices and co-production became much more embedded in our MNVP and in the Trust and services.

Donna, our Senior Lead also joined the perinatal leadership team at the Trust as the formal Service User Voice Lead.

SFT's Maternity and Neonatal Perinatal Leadership Team update Working Together to Deliver Outstanding Perinatal Care

The Perinatal Leadership Team (PLT) at Somerset Foundation Trust is committed to supporting staff across our Maternity and Neonatal services. Together, we oversee care from early pregnancy through birth and the immediate postnatal period, ensuring that every stage is safe, effective, and centred on the needs of families. Our role is to champion quality improvement, uphold safety standards, and foster collaboration across teams—so that every pregnant person, baby, and family receives the best possible care. We value your expertise and dedication, and we're here to work alongside you to continuously strengthen our services.

 Alison Dennett Head of Midwifery MPH	 Laura Wilson Head of Women's and Sexual Health Services NH	 Pieter Van Hensbergen Consultant Paediatrician MPH	 Claire Lovelock Obstetric Clinical Service Lead MPH	 Eleanor Zaremba Consultant Anaesthetist & anaesthetic Lead for Obstetrics MPH
 Stephanie Larcombe Head of Midwifery YDH	 Siba Paul Consultant Paediatrician YDH	 Krishna Murala Obstetric Clinical Service Lead YDH	 Rimon Muhareb Consultant Anaesthetist YDH	 Donna Butland Maternity and Neonatal SUV Lead

Our team structure

Donna Butland, Senior MNVP Lead – 16 hours per week

Dylan Perry, MNVP Trust Lead – 32 hours per week

Olivia Stewart, Engagement Officer – 16 hours per week

Lyndsay Andrews, Neonatal Lead – 16 hours per month

Alex Perry, Social Media Officer – 16 hours per month

Kate Chisnell, Equity and Equality Training Representative – 4 hours per month

Amber Strong, Birth Worker Representative – 2 hours per month

Engaging with our community

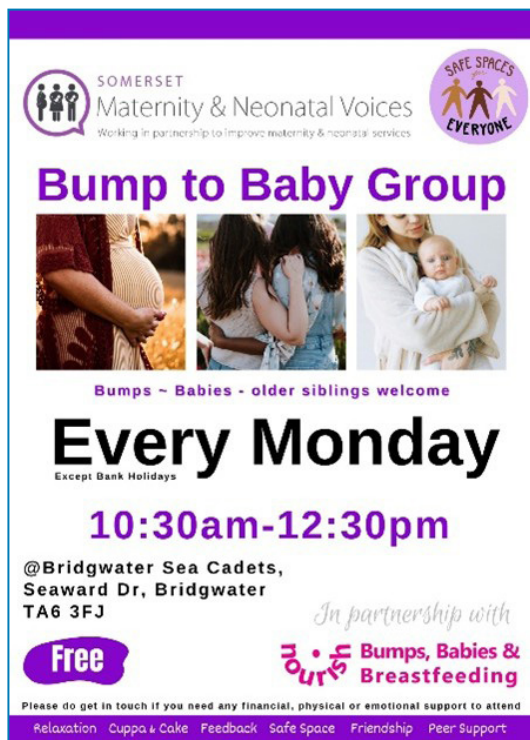
We engage with our communities in a variety of ways including through the regular clubs and events we organise, and by involving service users and staff when we visit maternity and neonatal settings. We also raise awareness of our work and engage through reports, newsletters, social media and our website.

Building connections

In May 2024 we partnered up with **Nourish** in Bridgwater and moved our weekly **Bump to Baby Group** to the Sea Cadets space so people could get breastfeeding advice and use a sling library as well as sharing their feedback and experiences of maternity and neonatal care.

Olivia continued to attend regular groups set up around Somerset including:

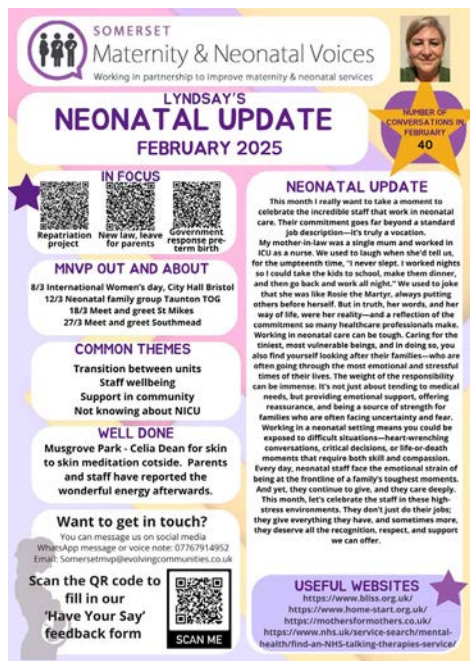
- **Baby Group** - Creech St Michael
- **Storytime and Bounce & Rhyme** - Taunton Library
- **Storytime** - Wellington Library
- **Little Seedlings** - Cheddon Fitzpaine
- **St John's Stay & Play** - Wellington
- **Village Midwife postnatal sessions** - Taunton area
- **Stoke Tots** - Stoke St Mary
- **Compass Wellbeing Stay & Play** - Taunton



Our poster for the weekly group



We are set up and ready at the Baby Group



Monthly neonatal newsletter

Since joining our team in 2024 Lyndsay has had hundreds of conversations with families and neonatal parents. She began writing a monthly newsletter of what she was doing, and some personal reflections as a neonatal mum herself.

Lyndsay also helped to build a WhatsApp community for neonatal parents voices in 2024.

In October 2024, Lyndsay attended an **African Mums & Babies** event with local charity **Diversity Voice**.



African Mums & Babies event

“Thank you for taking the time to join us and share your invaluable insights with the mums. Your presence made such a positive impact, and we are incredibly grateful for your support.” **African Mums and Babies group**

Family Fun Days

In August 2024 we held a **Family Fun Day** at Cheddon Fitzpaine to say thank you to our volunteers for their support and celebrate our work. We welcomed anyone who wanted to find out more about joining the MNVP and meet the team in person. We made up merchandise canvas bags with new items, including tins of lip balm and branded notebooks. We had food, a bouncy castle, ride on cars, soft play and a face painter!



Our MNVP team at the Family Fun Day



Our merchandise



Family Fun Day bouncy castle, soft play and ride on cars

There was also a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (**NICU**) Family Fun Day on 1 February 2025 at the Bishops Hull Hub, which was well attended. There was food, a bouncy castle, a face painter and crafts!



Event poster



NICU Family Fun Day

International Day of the Midwife

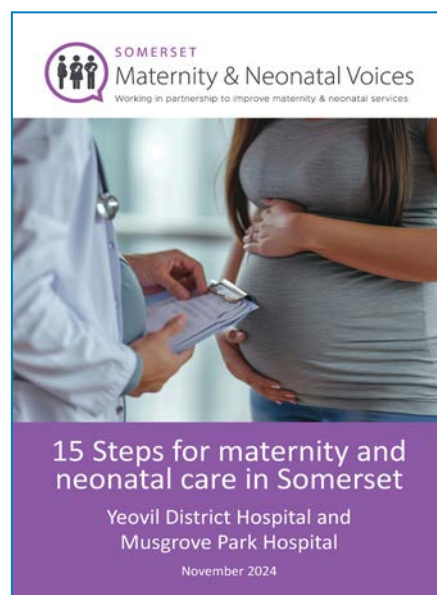
On International Day of the Midwife (IDN) - 5 May 2024 - we shared over **50 STAR Awards** to celebrate members of staff that delivered amazing, personalised care. Huge congratulations to all!



15 Steps to quality maternity care

In November 2024 we published our *15 Steps for maternity and neonatal care in Somerset* report. We had excellent attendance on both days with really engaged groups. We came up with 49 recommendations across Musgrove Park Hospital and Yeovil District Hospital.

You can read the report at: evolvingcommunities.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/15-Steps-report-2024-finalr.pdf



Our 15 Steps visit at Yeovil District Hospital on 2 July 2024: service users, babies and MNVP colleagues



Service users (and baby!) with MNVP colleagues at Musgrove Park Hospital on 16 July 2024

Equity, Equality and Personalised Care Training

In 2024/25 our freelance trainer Kate Chisnall, facilitated training for Trust staff in *Equity, Equality and Personalised Care*. We had really good feedback from the training and used real world examples to enhance the care that midwives and doctors give. This generated a lot of healthy discussion and encouraged staff to think about how best to personalise care for people and families that they care for.

Recognising good care: STAR Awards

We have continued to run our **STAR Awards** every month, each one made by Dylan, our Lead, and this year we shared...

312 STAR Awards to recognise amazing care given by Trust Staff. The awards are broken down as follows:

2024:

March – 18
April – 50
May – 24
June – 25
July – 19
August – 21
September – 27
October – 25
November – 13

2025:

December/January – 25
February – 33
March – 32



Just one of our 50 Star awards for IDM 2024

Huge congratulations to all and these awards show that many staff are consistently giving caring, kind, compassionate and personalised care. Well done!

Co-production and collaboration

Throughout 2024/25 we contributed to and collaborated on the following workstreams:

Safety walkabouts	Health visiting	Infant feeding
BSOTS Triage	Diabetes	Vaccines
LMNS Programme Board	HOPE reflections	CQC freetext themes
Leaflets work	Website development	Interviews
Homebirth Team	Pelvic Health	National Maternity Safety Forum
Band 6 Away Days	BFI and Bliss SNICU work	Insight visits
SW Personalised Care	Smoking cessation	Offered 1-1 appointments
ERA work	Visited Chard	6-8 week GP check work
MIS Year 7	PSCP	Antenatal education
Prevention work	Badger Notes	SWIFIC
Neonatal PAG/ODN	Reduced fetal movements	Bereavement room improvements
ICON	MNISA	PSIRF

With the help of our amazing MNVP committee group, through lots of rounds of feedback we were really proud to co-produce a **Personalised Care and Support Plan**, as requested by NHS England in order to enhance the quality of care that women and birthing people receive, as well as giving them space to write about what matters to them and their families and any questions they had about their care.

Thousands of these were printed and given to community midwives to be handed out at people's booking appointments. This came at a time when the Trust was switching over to digital notes by using an App called **Badger Notes**, and people fed back that it was nice to also have a paper copy of this.

This is what the plan's cover looks like (*right*). Inside the plan there is plenty of space for notes, space for questions and journal entries, previous birth experiences, space for partner/support people to write in, preferences, the BRAIN decision making tool, a timeline of care, triage numbers and care planning suggestions.



Feedback themes

We had **100** *Have your say* forms completed.

We had **226** responses to our surveys that were put on social media.

We shared all this feedback with Somerset NHS Foundation Trust at their meetings, in Governance and in co-production action plans.

We analysed the themes from the 2024 CQC freetext comments, where people could share anything they wanted about their care and found that these were the most common things that people shared as areas for improvements:

Personalised care	Birth experience
Staffing	Antenatal education
Pain relief/Being listened to	Feeding support
Postnatal care/discharge	Consent
Communication/information	Induction/Ward flow
Antenatal/scanning	Equity
Estates	Neonatal care
Triage	GP/Health Visitor communication

We sat with the Senior Leadership Team and co-produced an action plan that detailed work that would be undertaken in all these areas going forward. These themes directly informed this action plan.

We also co-produced with our MNVP committee questions for several surveys which helped us with projects we were working on with the Trust.

These were:

- Aspirin in pregnancy
- Antenatal and scanning experiences
- Antenatal education
- Infant feeding
- Postnatal care and facilities
- LGBTQ+ people’s experiences
- Consultant led care
- Triage feedback
- Personalised Care and Support Plan use

Looking ahead 2025/26

Throughout the next year, in 2025/26, we will continue to ensure that the voices of women, birthing people and families directly shape and improve local maternity and neonatal services.

We will support the delivery of the national Maternity and Neonatal Improvement Plan in Somerset by attending key meetings, offering constructive challenge, and ensuring lived experience informs decisions about safety, quality and service changes.

Reducing inequalities is still a core focus for us. We will prioritise engagement with communities who are less heard, including Black, Asian and ethnic minority people and families, people living in areas of deprivation, as well as neurodivergent parents and LGBTQ+ parents. We are running dedicated engagement projects with neurodivergent and LGBTQ+ families which will result in clear findings and practical recommendations for improvement.

We will be recruiting an Engagement and Equity Lead to strengthen our inclusive outreach, build even more relationships with community groups, and increase meaningful equity involvement in our work.

We will continue to gather and analyse feedback through surveys, focus groups, walkabouts and annual **15 Steps** visits to maternity and neonatal units, ensuring themes are shared transparently and used to create and direct improvement.

Our aim is simple: safer, personalised and more equitable maternity and neonatal services across Somerset.

Get involved

Share your feedback

We are here to listen. Tell us about your experiences of maternity and neonatal services in Somerset - good or bad, we want to know. **Scan the QR code** to go to our webpage.

The feedback you provide will be shared anonymously with the LMNS and wider health providers where appropriate. It will be used to improve care and services.

We are unable to reply to you or resolve complaints; if you would like to raise a complaint you will need to do this with the hospital or care provider.

Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers.

We are also looking for Community Engagement Champions who are people that manage businesses, services, CIC's or charities in the community that support people that use maternity and neonatal services.





SOMERSET
Maternity & Neonatal Voices
Working in partnership to improve maternity & neonatal services



Can you help?

We are looking for **neonatal** parents...





To join our volunteer team!

Help us to understand your experiences of maternity and neonatal care, support our neonatal workplan and share ideas for change!

Email: neonatalvoices@evolvingcommunities.co.uk
WhatsApp: 07767914952



"I am delighted to pass on my thanks for the work undertaken by the MNVP in Somerset. Their contribution to planning, implementing change, informing learning and keeping the voice of our service users front and foremost in our discussions is phenomenal. The role the MNVP play is absolutely essential and the passion with which individuals undertake their role is humbling. Thank you for all that you do on behalf of the Local Maternity and Neonatal System and Somerset ICB."

Shelagh Meldrum, Chief Nursing Officer, Somerset ICB

"The MNVP are nothing but vital in the functioning of our maternity and neonatal services. We can only aim to get this right with their lens, support and challenge. MNVP input is embedded throughout our whole process, their impact in meetings, conversations and improvements is understood and valued. From their lead, who is outstanding, to the whole organisation, the professionalism is clear. The women, birthing people and families of Somerset should be proud that they have a service of the quality of our MNVP to be a voice where one is vital!"



James Coulston, Associate Medical Director for Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Neonates, Somerset Foundation Trust



"I am delighted to extend my sincere thanks to our Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP) for their invaluable contribution over the past year. Having the MNVP team working alongside us is a genuine privilege. Their commitment to true co-production ensures that the voices, experiences, and priorities of the families we serve are woven into everything we do."

"The service-user perspective that MNVP brings is not only powerful—it is essential. It strengthens our decision-making, enriches our improvement work, and keeps us firmly grounded in what matters most: safe, kind, and personalised care for every family across Somerset."

"Thank you for your partnership, your challenge, your compassion, and your unwavering dedication. We are stronger, more responsive, and more accountable because of the work we do together."

Sally Bryant, Director of Midwifery for Somerset

Contact us

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