

Bay- Wide Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP)
Annual report for 2018

Introduction from Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) –

The Maternity Voices Partnership across Morecambe Bay has gone from strength to strength over recent years. Through the MVP we hear many stories of excellent care and truly exceptional staff. We also hear about things that can be improved and make sure that people have a say in how they are improved. With the help of the MVP we are able to ensure that women's voices are at the heart of our maternity care. Together we help to ensure that our maternity services provide the best care for women, babies and wider families. We are very grateful to the volunteers who give their time to help run the MVP and to the women and their partners and families who share their experiences of our maternity services.

Julia Westaway

Introduction from Service User Chair

I am extremely grateful for every parent who has given their precious time and energy to the Bay-Wide Maternity Voices Partnership, by sharing their experience and views, for taking the trouble to attend groups and workshops, responding to FaceBook or helping gather some friends together. Your voice is **integral** to the work that the partnership is able to achieve. We simply can't do it without you! We can genuinely make a difference as a team when you 'have your say' as we can then ensure it is heard, considered and acted upon.

As is the case with all national MVPs, we face the constant challenge of renewing parental involvement. We are constantly seeking opportunities to engage more women and those who support them and welcome anyone with any time to spare. We can offer a wide range of ways that people can contribute and use their experience and skills and if you have an opportunity to offer help then we can make good use of it!

I would also like to give my gratitude and thanks to the team of professionals who have supported me as the Chair of Maternity Voices, and to those parents who have become involved. We have fostered trust and understanding which has developed enjoyable working relationships and has enabled the voices of the women we represent to truly shape the services provided. I have had unequivocal support from the Support Manager for Children and Maternity, Children and Maternity Senior System Manager, Head of Midwifery, Clinical Director, Consultants and Matrons, Professional Midwifery Advocate, Unit Managers, Lead and Specialist midwives in Health and Wellbeing, Practice Development, Safe Active Birth Midwives, Health Visitors and Infant Feeding leads and last but not least, on the ground community and unit midwives. Everyone has been welcoming, encouraging and enthusiastic about making a positive difference together. It has been a busy but rewarding year and one on which we have laid stronger foundations for working positively together in the future for the benefit of every woman and her family in Maternity Care.

Mel Elliston
(Previously Mel Gard)



How do we make a difference?

Although we do respond to the themes that emerge from the feedback we receive, it is not always about pursuing a specific 'topic' and making big changes but about being a presence which *constantly* asks the question, "How would this feel for a mum or her partner?" and which keeps an awareness with everyone in the room about why they are there. Being a regular face at meetings, recruitment, workshops and on the units builds relationships and fosters positive actions. It's about the professionals respecting the fact that, even though they clearly work for the women's best interest, women know more than anyone about what their needs are, and so may have a different perspective. It's about bringing the ♥ more clearly into the room.

The fact that the MVP is practically and financially supported by commissioners and care providers gives recognition to the value and importance which the service puts on women's input. The message to service users is that their voice matters and supports the Morecambe Bay ethos of 'putting women and families at the heart of everything we do'.

Review of achievements from work plan for 2018

- **To continue with regular commitments to represent Maternity Voices which are embedded in the Maternity system**
- **Meetings** – The MVP is automatically invited to the Labour Ward Forum, the Children and Maternity Commissioning meetings and the Better Births meetings, to keep updated on current action plans. Our contributions as service user representatives are welcomed and our views embraced. We have brought case studies to the Labour Ward Forum, to demonstrate both excellence and concerns, and these have been encouraged.
- **Recruitment Interviews** – The MVP are always invited to participate and set questions for recruitment interviews for all maternity staff. Sometimes we are invited to be on the interview panel and on occasion chair focus groups for recruitment of posts such as Consultants, lead midwives, Matrons and Governance. Our views as service user representatives are given equal consideration to the views of clinicians and our marks hold equal weight in the decision making. We welcome interest from any members of the MVP that would like to take part in this and we can offer mentoring in this role. The role does not require any clinical knowledge, participation is from the perspective of women and their families, and just requires an ability to make assessments based on what we know about experience and needs.
- **Catch-ups with Head of Midwifery** – The MVP Chair has regular 'catch-up' chats with the Head of Midwifery to be able to feedback on themes, discuss concerns and celebrate good progress.
- **To continue to represent women's voices in Local Maternity System (LMS) Better Births work streams**
- **Local Maternity System** – The Bay-Wide MVP have been involved in all the work streams of the Better Births transformation programme across Lancashire and South Cumbria. We have requested that all the MVPs be represented on each of the work streams so that we can contribute to the agenda and ensure it supports the women in our local areas. We also attend regular 'Maternity Assemblies' and the 'LMS Board Meeting' in our locality.
- **Work with the Family Engagement Coordinator**– The MVP were part of the interview panel for the Family Engagement Coordinator. She regularly attends our discussion groups. We invited her to meet the Matron of South Lakes Birth Centre (SLBC) to discuss how to raise the profile of the MVP and also organised a visit to the local 'young mums' group and a tour of the area to get a feel for how Barrow's unique geography. The coordinator was asking for case studies for the LMS and we introduced her to a couple in their home who told their story in detail and this story was subsequently used to take forward both congratulations and a concern.

- **MVP groups with a 'special focus'** – We have recently started holding MVP groups with a special focus on some of the areas covered by the LMS workstreams, this has attracted some parents who would not otherwise have attended the group. At our regular discussion groups we have had a focus on the developments in Perinatal Mental Health (PNMH), Maternity Hubs, Transitional Care, the 'E Red Book' and pregnancy loss.
- **Remuneration for MVPs** – We have supported other MVPs in the LMS to work with their CCGs to secure remuneration for the role of Chair as we, at Morecambe Bay, have been leading this principle. We have communicated with the other MVP Chairs and been supported in this by the Family Engagement Coordinator.
- **Choice and Personalisation** – The Bay-wide MVP have taken a lead in engaging with local mums at a workshop to gain an understanding about what 'choice' means to them and how best to present maternity choices information in a leaflet which will be available electronically. This work will initiate the contribution from all the MVPs in order to develop a working draft.
- **Recognition of the MVP's success** – We were invited to: -
 - Share our good practice for working as a successful professional/service user liaison group with those working in cancer care.
 - Present our positive working relationship with care providers and commissioners at the CCG Governing Body Meeting.
 - Have a stand to engage with the participants on the UHMB Annual Members Meeting.
- **To facilitate, evaluate and develop Communication Training Workshops.**
- The Communication Workshops were originally developed by the MVP from a project which involved filming a series of service user stories that captured the experience of communication between care providers and service users. A training toolkit was developed alongside this and the workshops were rolled out to all professionals who come into contact with a woman during her maternity journey. The workshops provided an opportunity for practitioners to listen to the service user perspective and reflect together as a multi-disciplinary team in order to deliver empathetic and compassionate care in any birthing circumstances.
- The Communication Workshops have continued throughout the year, with two workshops per month, to completion in November 2018. The Chair co-hosted and facilitated the training with the presentation by the Professional Midwifery Advocate and Education Midwife. We worked closely together as a supportive and effective team in the review and evaluation of the training as it progressed.
- All disciplines were represented at this training and over 266 members of staff - over half - have taken part. Formal complaints to the Trust have historically often involved poor communication of some kind and this was one of the reasons this project was supported. At the end of 2018 there were two months where no maternity complaints were received by the Trust, demonstrating that the culture of communication has greatly improved. We feel that this project has had a significant impact on improvements.
- **To facilitate two Service User Feedback Groups - in each locality each year, and respond to emerging themes.**
- We have facilitated a group, which a parent gathered for us, to hear feedback in Morecambe and have also visited a large playgroup in Kendal, a breast feeding support group in Ulverston and 'young mums' groups in Barrow. Combined with the visits to existing groups to reach those outlying or vulnerable parents who we don't usually hear from (mentioned below) we have generally been successful in our intention to meet more service users from diverse areas. The more service users we are able to reach, the more likely it is that we will find those who are willing to give their time to reach more people and thus we hope to further expand.
- Following a significant body of feedback at the end of 2017 and early 2018 the MVP worked with the Trust to ensure that each of the themes of comments were being responded to and were fed into the current action plans. These have largely been picked up by the Better Births work streams, for example, Continuity of Carer and the Baby Friendly Initiative.

- If there have been any new themes or concerns raised we take them directly to the lead midwives or other staff who need to hear them. For example, there was a concern raised from a case study (of two mums who had had a baby after long IVT treatment) that their excellent experience was marred by the birthing mum's wife not being permitted in theatre when she was having a spinal. We high-lighted this concern with Obstetricians, Anaesthetists and Midwives at the Labour Ward Forum and this case study enabled them to take the necessary steps to ensure that in future the woman's choice to have her birth partner with her will be respected from all staff.
 - As mentioned above, we have responded to emerging themes from feedback by giving a focus to our main regular discussion groups. In Morecambe we focused on Perinatal Mental Health. This was a very well attended and deeply moving gathering where women felt safe to express very personal stories in the company of a diverse group of professionals. In Barrow we focused on Pregnancy Loss. We are planning a focus on Infant Feeding in response to this very emotional issue.
- **Working with the Professional Midwifery Advocate and other specialist midwives**
- If a mum tells us a story where we feel she would benefit from a formal de-brief, we always refer them directly to the 'Professional Midwifery Advocate' (this replaces the role of Midwifery Supervision). Despite work to publicise this opportunity through the maternity service and the MVP, some women still don't realise they can have this debrief and the MVP has an important role in helping promote this opportunity. We also work closely with other specialist midwives such as the Health and Well-being midwife for example to review Infant Feeding and Ante-Natal education.
- **To include outreach to more difficult-to-reach and vulnerable groups of parents in areas such as Morecambe, Barrow and rural areas**
- We have been able to fulfil this aim particularly in relation to the Better Births work stream 'Maternity Hubs' and 'Continuity of Carer' with the help of some professionals in commissioning and midwifery. We visited groups in Millom, Kirby Stephen, Windermere and Westgate, Poulton, and Barrow Island. It was great to talk to these groups and the feedback was collated and we presented the findings at a 'Maternity Hubs' workshop for healthcare professionals which supported their area of work. We have made or developed contacts with other groups or networks which we hope will enable us to expand our engagement with service users next year. These include: Action for Children, DadsNet, Women's Community Matters and a mums group in Barrow, Parents with Prospects, South Cumbria Breastfeeding Support and Healthwatch Cumbria.
- **To urge the Trust to complete the 'Infant Feeding Strategy', and monitor its implementation through the service user engagement.**
- The Infant Feeding Strategy was completed and ratified after working closely with the midwives. This has now been superseded by the Trust registering for the Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI). The MVP has welcomed this decision as it is seen as the best model for implementing and evaluating a high quality service of Infant Feeding support for all mothers. We are working very closely with service users with a diverse range of experience along with the BFI project leads to ensure that its implementation in Morecambe Bay meets all families' needs. A special focus is planned at a group early in 2019 where all voices will be heard.
 - We were invited to be present at the presentation of the South Cumbria Breast Feeding Support charity award for being a 'Breast Friend' at South Lakes Birth Centre. This was awarded to a neonatal nurse in Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) who had spent a great deal of time supporting a mum and baby to continue breast feeding in difficult circumstances. Following a discussion with the Matron regarding the recent upturn in breast feeding initiation on the unit the SCBU and MVP rep decided to acknowledge this significant improvement by jointly gifting a basket of fruit to all the staff. It was well received! We work in close contact with the South Lakes Birth Centre Lactation Consultant and volunteers.

- **To monitor birth and post-natal experience through ‘Walking the patch’ at RLI and SLBC, monthly if possible.**
- We have developed an excellent working relationship with the staff on the units who welcome us ‘walking the patch’ at any time we find the opportunity. We would like to be able to achieve the goal of once a month on each site and we are currently briefing new service user representatives who would like to help us with this. Once we have talked to the parents who are happy to share with us, we immediately give feedback to the ward staff to celebrate what is done well and pass on thanks. If there are any helpful suggestions or concerns we are able to raise them straight away with the unit manager and Matron to make improvements or ensure any appropriate action is taken. We are often able to give feedback to parents on the current work streams where any of their comments will be taken. We are very pleased to report that all the parents we have spoken to this year have been generally very happy with their care and appreciated the opportunity to have their comments recorded.

- **To represent service users at conferences and workshops.**
- We have represented service users at the following conferences, workshops and events: -
 - **Perinatal Mental Health conference** – a recent service user attended with the chair to represent the service user viewpoint.
 - **Safe Active Birth Conference** – the chair and two recent service users were invited to give an overview of the difference the Safe Active Birth ethos makes to women and their families for any birthing situation.
 - **Mother and Baby Unit (MBU)** – the Open Day for the new MBU for Lancashire and Cumbria at Chorley.
 - **MVP Workshop for professionals** – we created an MVP workshop for professionals to help us raise awareness of the MVP which has resulted in some effective actions of getting more of the ground staff actively involved and new parents beginning to show an interest.
 - **Student midwives presentations** – we attended the student midwives presentations of their dissertation projects which keeps us up to date with current good practice in midwifery.
 - **Maternity Hubs Workshop** – we presented our findings regarding engagement with groups around ‘Maternity Hubs’ at a workshop for the multi-disciplinary team who will be networking to deliver services within the community. We also helped to prepare the workshop and participated in the conversations.
 - **Health Visitors Team Meeting** – the MVP delivered a short presentation to a group of health visitors to try to raise our profile and generate enthusiasm for helping us get in touch with parents.
 - **Art of Hosting** – the MVP chair has become part of the ‘Art of Hosting’ team which facilitates a 3 day training on how to creatively engage groups of people in meaningful conversations. This year it has been held in Barrow (for Furness area) and Windermere (for South Lakes area) with a follow up session for previous Morecambe trainings in Lancaster. This experience has enabled us to develop these useful tools to actively use in regular MVP meetings and workshops. We find it a very rewarding way to work and enables everyone to feel valued and heard.
 - **Health Heroes** – we were invited to the ‘Health Heroes’ event for celebrating good work, as part of the team of professionals and service users involved in developing the South Lakes Birth Centre.

Further achievements in 2018

- **Promotional Materials** – we have developed new promotional materials with the Maternity Voices Branding. This includes banners – the first with one of our mums and her baby and another with a dad and newborn – both promoting skin to skin contact. We have also designed posters to go in frames for toilet doors and large posters for the units, ‘I need you in my team’ leaflets inviting involvement, business cards and stickers for Red Books. We are planning a big distribution of these in 2019 and would very much value help from both professionals and parents to distribute these as widely as possible to raise awareness of the MVP and the work we do.
- **New Curriculum for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG)** – the chair was asked to review and comment on the New Curriculum for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) by the National Maternity Voices. We were happy to be part of the process of the RCOG curriculum becoming more and more woman-centred and in particular regarding shared education decision making and communication.
- **West North East Cumbria MVP meeting** – we held a meeting with the MVP chair in West North East Cumbria to share good practice on MVP involvement in the Better Births workstreams, for both Trusts and CCGs
- **South Lakes Birth Centre (SLBC)** – the new SLBC at Furness General Hospital was officially opened on Valentine’s Day 2018. This was one of the key actions resulting from the Morecambe Bay Investigation. The MVP has been involved in viewing the progress of the new SLBC prior to its opening, following on from helping to engage service users in commenting on the initial plans. This development is a significant improvement in facilities for women and families in the Furness and wider South Lakes area and the MVP has been involved throughout the project to ensure that women’s views have been incorporated. The work with Maternity Voices was kindly acknowledged and celebrated in the opening presentation. We have been invited to the first birthday party in 2019!
- **Feedback around Maternity, Paternity or Adoption leave** – the Assistant Director of Workforce, who also works with the UHMBT Gender Equality Network, approached the MVP to explore the possibility of inviting feedback from staff who have been on Maternity, Paternity or Adoption leave. It is recognised that they have a unique lens in which to experience the care provided.
- **Helme Chase Positive Birth Group** – there is a group of enthusiastic parents, keen to promote the Midwifery Led Unit, who run a ‘Positive Birth Group’ at Helme Chase. The Positive Birth Group is now evolving and the midwives are very happy to support. It’s great to be working together to raise awareness of what a great place Helme Chase is to give birth for women with straightforward pregnancies. These mums have also helped represent the MVP at ‘Helme Chase Open Days’ to take to prospective parents considering using Helme Chase for birth or Infant Feeding support.
- **RCOG implementation review clinical senate** – the MVP chair received thanks for our involvement in the RCOG implementation review clinical senate.
- **Postnatal discharge film** – service users from the MVP provided feedback on a film that had been produced by the Trust to support postnatal discharge. Their recommendations were taken on board to review the film content.

Workplan for 2019

- To continue representing Maternity Voices with regular commitments which are embedded in the UHMB Maternity system e.g. Labour Ward Forum, Better Births Commissioning Meetings, Recruitment Interviews, reviewing guidelines and leaflets.
- To continue outreach and service user groups including more difficult to reach and vulnerable groups e.g. different ethnic communities and rural areas, depending on service user capacity to assist.
- To continue to represent our local women's voices in Local Maternity System and Better Births work streams, e.g. Maternity Hub and Continuity of Carer development, including engagement with other MVPs and Family Engagement Coordinator.
- 'Walking the patch' on the units regularly and developing the 15 steps reviews with Matrons, including introductions to the unit staff.
- To review the "Communication in Maternity Matters" training workshops to present to the Trust.
- To monitor BFI implementation with the project lead and offer feedback as it emerges.
- To attend and represent MVP at Conferences, workshops, Babyfest etc.
- Distribute publicity materials to all Health Visitors, Community Hubs, Hospital Units, GPs and other suitable locations with the assistance of staff and volunteers.

Possible New Projects to explore in 2019/20

(These projects are dependent on the number of volunteers that are able to support the work of the MVP)

- **To work with the gynaecology matron and sonographers around early pregnancy loss**
 - The professionals are very eager to work with any service users on improving the care received at this time but as yet we do not have any women who feel able to engage in this work as understandably it is such a painful experience to revisit. We welcome any offers of involvement. Staff in gynaecology and sonography have attended the communication training workshops and we hope that this will contribute to compassionate care. The Matron and ward manager also attended an MVP group, with a pregnancy loss focus, to give us an overview of how they support women and some service users were able to share their experiences of good experience with them there.
- **To review Ante-Natal Education content and availability**
 - The MVP explored the current provision with midwives and helped to initiate a review meeting. There are plans for further work to be done on extending the provision from midwives, including classes for learning relaxation practice (for example by teaching hypnobirthing techniques). The MVP is also in discussion with the midwives about the content of this extended provision because women frequently raise this in their feedback.
- **To engage with the Ambulance Service**
 - We are still hoping to initiate this project when other priorities allow and we have volunteers to take the lead. Do please get in touch with the MVP if this is an area of interest.

Links to Useful Documents and websites

Bay-Wide MVP Terms of reference: -

<https://www.morecambabayccg.nhs.uk/about-us/publications/get-involved/944-tor-bay-wide-mvp/file>

Healthwatch Report 2016: -

<http://healthwatchcumbria.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/HW-Maternity-Matters-FINAL.pdf>

Annual Report 2016: -

<https://www.morecambabayccg.nhs.uk/about-us/publications/get-involved/577-maternity-services-liaison-committee-annual-report-2016/file>

Annual Report 2017: -

<https://www.morecambabayccg.nhs.uk/about-us/publications/get-involved/956-bay-wide-mvp-annual-report-2017/file>

Morecambe Bay CCG website: -

<https://www.morecambabayccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/maternity-voices-partnership>

University Hospitals Morecambe Bay website: -

<https://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/maternity>

National Maternity Voices website: -

<http://nationalmaternityvoices.org.uk/>

