

This is a transcribe of the annual report film that was created by the MSLC service user reps and which can be found here:

<https://westberksmslc.wordpress.com/annual-reports/>

INTRODUCTION

The Maternity Forum covers Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire, and is a Maternity Services Liaison Committee. We are a team of service users, service user representatives, midwives, doctors and commissioners, and we work together to review and contribute to the development of local Maternity Services.

We're an Independent Advisory Body and we report to the local GP Commissioning Group. The Service User Representatives, who are mostly volunteers, meet monthly for either a formal meeting with the whole committee; a review and planning session; or a feedback session in the community. When we collect feedback, we're interested in all of a woman's maternity care, right from the booking-in appointment with a community midwife early in pregnancy to handing over to the Health Visiting Team, usually at around ten days after giving birth. We don't discuss individual cases or handle complaints, but we look for themes in feedback and for individual good ideas for improvements. Anyone who has used local Maternity Services in Reading, Wokingham or West Berkshire is very welcome to come and get involved.

Lisa Ramsey, MSLC Chair - Hi, I'm Lisa Ramsey and I'm the Chair of the Maternity Forum, the Maternity Services Liaison Committee for Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire. So over the last year, we have gathered feedback from women in a number of ways. One way is that we "walk the patch", so quarterly we go into the two postnatal wards at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Marsh and Iffley, and mums who have got five minutes to chat to us about their maternity experience do so. We have probably spoken to about 40 to 50 women in this way. Another way the Maternity Forum gets feedback is via our online survey and over the past year we have had almost 400 women give us their feedback in this way.

We also get feedback from mums in the community and we tend to find them at Mum and Baby groups and we ask them if they are happy to talk to us about their maternity care experience, tell us what was good, what maybe wasn't so good, what they would like to see different and better, maybe for themselves next time they have a baby, or for other women having babies in this area.

Sometimes we invite women to a focus group which is usually related to something specific. So last year we knew that there were consultants and midwives at the Royal Berkshire Hospital working on their Induction Pathway so we arranged a focus group with women who had been induced and they were able to come and share their experiences and be able to contribute to how the Induction Pathway could be developed and made better for women in the future.

Because women find it really easy to give feedback online, we often do a specific online survey. So over the last year we've done one on visiting hours on the postnatal wards, where we've said to women and partners, "these are the current hours, did they suit you when you had your baby? Would you have liked them to be different? If you had another baby in the future, what would you like the visiting hours situation to be?"

In another survey we ran towards the end of 2015, we asked mums to give us their feedback when they had had a baby who needed Special Care, and needed to be on a different ward to them after birth; how their care was managed, what they found difficult, what would have made it better?

Feedback from both of those surveys went direct to our Maternity Forum, which involves midwives and doctors at the hospital and the people planning Maternity Services so that they could take that information and, where possible, make changes.

SOME OF OUR SERVICE USER REPRESENTATIVES

Maz Wraight - Hi, I'm Maz. I'm one of the Service User Reps on the MSLC. I joined the MSLC because I had three very different but all good experiences of birth myself and I just became interested in feeding back to the Maternity

Services at the hospital. I'm around and about in the community quite a bit and have lots of contact with other mums and I felt I would be able to gain feedback from people that might be useful for Maternity Services to receive.

Emma Taylor, MSLC Vice Chair - Hi, my name's Emma. I'm one of the Service User Reps on the MSLC because I think it's really important that women have their voices heard and that they feel heard. I have a passion for women and babies and helping them to have the best start possible, and the earliest start is when the baby is actually born in hospital and so I think it's really important to help women to have their voices heard and for those voices to be make a difference to the decisions that are being made in hospital.

Nancy Carter - I'm Nancy. I'm a Service User Rep on the MSLC with a special interest in breastfeeding. I'm part of the team because I believe in giving praise where praise is due and encouraging best practice.

Laura Draper - I'm Laura. I'm on the MSLC as a Service User Rep. I report to the MSLC through my involvement with the Stork Fund which is a Maternity Services charity, and my other involvement is through my work as a doula. I support women who give birth at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, so I have knowledge of how things are happening on the different delivery suites and on Rushey Ward, and by just being there, I'm in a position to notice what's happening and then encourage mums to give feedback that will make a difference.

Karen Hall, MSLC Secretary - I'm Karen and I'm a MSLC Service User Rep because it allows me to indulge my passion for communicating about birth and new parenthood and supporting women in those times, and as a Breastfeeding Counsellor, I meet many mothers and hear their stories, and I know this is a really important thing to do.

Catherine Williams - My name is Catherine and I am a Service User member of the Maternity Forum and I am a representative because the way that women give birth matters. It makes a difference to them at the time; it affects them, their families and their children going forward and many of them will remember it for the rest of their lives. It's so important that we work together with health care professional colleagues, the commissioners and others to make a difference, to try to make things better and to make it right for each individual woman and her family.

ACHIEVEMENTS 2015-2016

So one of the projects that the Service User Reps on the Maternity Forum have been involved in recently is reviewing the posters that are on display within the Maternity Unit, to make sure they are up-to-date and evidence-based. So that's been really helpful for us and we have included women in that. One of the things we are working on is pulling all of the positive comments that we get from feedback about the care they have received at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and creating some posters that we can add to the Maternity Unit to really inspire expectant parents in terms of the high levels of care they are likely to receive. One of our Service User Reps sits on a local steering group that looks at Breastfeeding Services across Reading so we are able to contribute women's feedback to that group so that mothers who choose to breastfeed in this area can have the best support available.

One of the pieces of feedback that we have had quite a lot over the past few years is to do with postnatal support and postnatal information that women are given as they leave hospital to go home with their new baby. So we are currently working on a really exciting project with some of the midwives at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and a developer, to possibly create a local maternity app that women can download on to their phone that has lots of local and really useful, up-to-date, evidence-based advice and information for them as they go home to start new parenthood with a new baby.

During the National Maternity Review last year, I had the pleasure of meeting with Baroness Julia Cumberledge who was leading the Review, and I made a really big point of telling her all about Maternity Forums and really stressed to her how important it is that as Maternity Services develop over the coming years, that listening to women, and partners, about their experiences (what's good? what's not so good? what they would like to see improved?), is really important.

We are one of the Maternity Forums within the Thames Valley who is involved with the Thames Valley Service User Group and so we have a representative from our Maternity Forum who joins that group to contribute what women are saying in our area, in our part of the Thames Valley to regional service development for maternity. One of the things we have done over the last year is visited a MSLC-run Mums' Support Group based in Hackney, to learn from them how they engage women from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and we are looking to use some of our learning from that day here in Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire.

One of the really useful things for me as Chair of the Maternity Forum is that over the last year we have appointed a Secretary and a Vice-Chair and we currently have sixteen Volunteer Service User Representatives who are the ones out in the community talking to women about their care experiences.

OUR AIMS FOR 2016-2017

So over the coming year we are planning to continue to gather feedback so that we can help to design and develop Maternity Services to really meet the needs of women, partners and babies. In addition to the ways we already gather feedback, this year we are implementing a new way, whereby we are hiring four venues over the next year and we are going to be inviting new parents, pregnant women, dads, to come along and share with us over a cup of tea and a piece of cake what was really good for them and what they would like to see improved and different in the future. We are hoping to have some maternity staff available to be present there to maybe answer questions, but also to be engaging with women, having open and honest conversations about what works and what women really want. And also what the evidence currently is saying about “what is good maternity care?”

The real priority for us is that we get to see maternity staffing levels improved to the point where staffing is at capacity and only then do we feel that a really good maternity service can be provided to women, partners and babies. Some of the outcomes from that we know will be a fully-functioning Home Birth Service so that women who choose who birth at home can be really assured that they are going to get a midwife to come and support them in the comfort of their home. We know that another of the outcomes will be that the Rushey Birth Centre, which is a wonderful resource for women across this area who are low-risk and want an intervention-free birth experience, that that is fully staffed and open 24/7.

Also, an outcome from sufficient staffing levels is that the care on the postnatal wards, Marsh and Iffley, for which we get lots of feedback from service users that it’s good, could be excellent, and one of the things that women ask for is consistent feeding advice and support, and so we know that with more staff, this will be possible.

Ultimately, for us who make up the Maternity Forum, we are most concerned with women’s voices being heard and listened to during pregnancy, during birth and in the postnatal period with a new baby.