

MSLC Good Practice

Case study - Improving support for women with mental health problems in pregnancy or after the birth of their baby in Lewisham

What has been achieved?

In 2014 and 2015, Lewisham MSLC voted 'Improving support to women with mental health problems in pregnancy or after the birth of their baby' as one of our top priorities for two consecutive years. This is an agreed priority for the SE London Maternity Network and for many of our neighbouring MSLCs in SE London.

What is making changes happen?

The MSLC held a themed meeting on mental health in pregnancy inviting regular members and anyone who had an interest or professional expertise in the subject. Actions followed from this:

- From that meeting and our annual development day, we agreed we would focus on de-stigmatising mental health and improving information to professionals and service-users on what help was available.
- We are making sure that any work we do is shared with our local MSLCs and the SE London perinatal mental health network as we all agree this is so important for the health of mothers, partners, babies and families

What parent and public involvement (PPI) was there?

There are several ways we are engaging with women and families:

- Our co-chair, Toyin Adeyinka, and Public Health Midwife, Pauline Cross, plan to meet with women who have experienced mental health problems to ensure their words are reflected in information produced and that they see everything before it is finalised
- Our MSLC co-chair, Rosie Newham, has designed two beautiful posters which we plan to put in a range of areas which state that 'It is ok not to feel mentally ok'.
- Our plan is to devise a simple web-based information page to let women and their partners know what mental ill health or distress feels like and where they can get support. This is based on feedback from women who told us they weren't sure if they felt 'bad enough' to get support.

Toyin Adeyinka, Co-chair, and service user said

'We want women to know that your emotional wellbeing is really important. By looking after yourself, and getting help if you need it, you are in a better place to look after your little ones. There's nothing to be ashamed about. I know how it feels, I've been there myself.'

Staphania Manfra, Co-chair, service user and student midwife, added:

'We want women to help us to help them. Women need to know that you're not unusual if you feel low or anxious. It's quite common but can be prevented or treated.'

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