

Advocating for mothers and f welfare rights

Maternity Action has been supporting pregnant women and new parents since 2008, by protecting and strengthening the rights of pregnant women and new parents to employment, social security, and healthcare. The in-house legal team also advises the healthcare professionals and community workers who support pregnant women and new parents.

Along with providing timely advice, Maternity Action has an active programme of research, policy, and campaigning on employment, social security, and healthcare. Their focus is particularly on issues affecting low income and marginalised women, including migrant and asylum-seeking women. In 2022, their work influenced the Health and Safety Executive, encouraging a change in the guidance that requires employers to better support pregnant employees.

The health justice partnership allows the service to increase its support work for more people at an earlier stage, so that expectant and new mothers can avoid reaching a point of crisis. For maternity teams, it saves practitioner time to focus on clinical issues by providing a referral route for non-clinical concerns around work and benefits, supporting maternity teams to address the social determinants of health.

Considerations during implementation of the Partnership

When setting up the partnership, it was decided to simplify the referral process and signpost users of the maternity service without official referral forms. This allows users to access the service at a time most convenient for them and enables the advisors to dedicate more time to giving advice rather than processing referrals. An information leaflet about the service is sent with the antenatal booking appointment letter, reaching women at an earlier point in their pregnancy. Midwives also use stickers on maternity notes to support referrals during appointment.

for getting the service established and developing relationships with the wider maternity team. A flexible response is also needed in order to make the partnership aspect of the project work. There was a need to adapt engagement approaches throughout the project, to respond to what would work for the midwifery team.

Another important factor is outreach and engagement with the local community and service partners. As the service delivers advice by telephone and email, there is no physical service presence. The next stage of the project will now introduce an outreach and engagement role to increase the visibility of the service and engage with the maternity team, local services, and women and families to promote service uptake.

Service webpage: <https://maternityaction.org.uk/cheshire-merseyside-maternity-rights/>

References and Contacts:

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<https://maternityaction.org.uk/>

<https://maternityaction.org.uk/2022/06/health-justice-partnerships/>

https://maternityaction.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Evaluating-HJPs_challenges-and-opportunities_FINAL.pdf