

City of Sanctuary **Maternity** Stream



Maternity Stream of the City of Sanctuary 2014 Report

Introduction

The Maternity Stream of the City of Sanctuary began in 2012 when a group of asylum seeking and refugee (AS&R) women came together with health professionals, educators, and others with the aim of improving the maternity care that women seeking sanctuary in the UK receive. In short, the aim was for women not to suffer as they had suffered and for the women themselves to be the driving force behind the project.

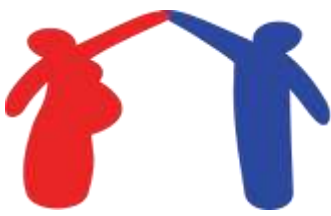
Until 2014 there were no paid staff for the Maternity stream, even though a website had been built, two films produced by the Maternity Stream were soon to be complete and interest in the project was growing across Yorkshire. In April 2014 the Maternity Stream Project Manager position began. This report aims to provide an insight into how the project manager has worked to help develop the Maternity Stream since her role was created, achieving and surpassing the role description developed for her.

The post was designed to cover 9 months at 7hrs/ week.

The Report includes the following sections:

1. Growing Influence
2. Awareness Raising
3. National Campaign
4. Maternity Service of Sanctuary Award
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7. Resources
8. Volunteering
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City of Sanctuary Maternity Stream

1. Growing Influence

Geographical

Currently the Maternity Stream aims to cover Yorkshire and Humber. Most of the work has been focused in Leeds and Bradford. However, strong connections have also been made in Hull and other areas including Wakefield and Huddersfield.

Outside of the region, connections have been made in Dublin, Belfast, and Swansea.

Online

Website: <http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/maternity>

The Maternity Stream website has grown and is becoming a hub for resources relevant to services supporting pregnant/postnatal AS&R women and the women accessing the services. It now houses a long list of relevant links and documents, the first of the Maternity Stream films, "Birth in the UK, stories from refugees" and details of the model the film was based on.

Facebook: Maternity Stream of the City of Sanctuary

Updated with relevant news articles, photos from events and outings, upcoming events and inspirations, the Facebook page has reached over 600 people and gains more "likes" week by week.

Twitter: 157 followers, 222 following and created 983 tweets

Feeds from the twitter account have gone global!



2. Awareness Raising

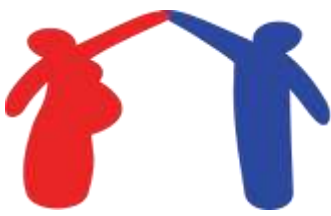
The AS&R volunteers received training in presentation skills from the West Yorkshire Playhouse which is the first theatre of Sanctuary in the UK. They were supported to practice speeches at monthly peer support meeting and as a result grew in confidence and have given awareness raising talks to student midwives and social workers as part of their courses. They shared their stories with over 100 students at Leeds Student Union and made a banner illustrating what they would like their relationship with their doctor to be which now is displayed outside the dean's office in Leeds Medical School.

Quote from a midwifery student:

"Of all of the sessions I have partaken in so far in my midwifery training, this one left the biggest impression on me. I will never forget the journeys of the women we were lucky enough to be in the company of, or wiping away tears as unimaginable experiences were recited (with laughter and smiles!) by figures of utter strength and determination. I left the session feeling awe for those who can find the strength required to carry on through such desperate times, and determination to never again show allegiance to a system which only serves to prolong them."

Awareness raising talks have been given at the last two NCT national conferences and as a result the NCT which is the largest charity supporting new parents, has become one of the first organisations to sign up as a member of the City of Sanctuary, with branches in different parts of the UK are looking at how they can support AS&R families.

Volunteers have presented sessions around the needs and experiences of pregnant AS&R women at a number of conferences and events including Hull University and the University of Central Lancashire. Two volunteers won a prize for the best presentation at an international conference in Brussels. Volunteers have also presented at the Sanctuary in Parliament event in the House of Commons in September 2014 and the National Sanctuary Summit in Birmingham.



3. National Campaign

The Maternity Stream of Sanctuary linked with the Refugee Council's "Dignity in Pregnancy Campaign". They provided case studies to support the campaign and one of the volunteers shared her experience of being dispersed during pregnancy at the launch of the campaign in the House of Commons.

4. Maternity Service of Sanctuary Award

Six services are in the process of applying for the award and over 20 other organisations have become involved with the project. Services who are directly applying for the award are based in Leeds and Bradford.

1. Haamla Service - Specialist Midwifery service for vulnerable migrant women in Leeds
2. CityWise - Leeds Sexual Health
3. BEVAN House - Social Enterprise for vulnerable, homeless and refugee and asylum seekers
4. Bradford Maternity Services base at Bradford Royal Infirmary
5. BIASAN women's group - Bradford Immigration & Asylum Support & Advice Network
6. Leeds NCT branch

5. Events

Bradford Conference; *"Striving for Excellence in Maternity Care in Bradford: A focus on Asylum Seeking and Refugee women"*

The project manager led the organisation of the conference in partnership with the Maternity Stream, University of Bradford, BEVAN healthcare and Bradford PCT. The conference was requested by the services as way to bring services together and provide training for their staff, in working towards the maternity service of sanctuary award.

There were 120 delegates and 52 on the waiting list representing over 20 different organisations. The event was Bradford focused, however services came from Lancaster, Huddersfield, Hull and Wakefield.



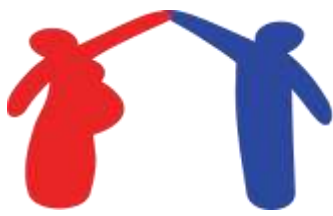
Evaluation from conference delegates:

"Eye-opening realising the complexities in daily life and mental health in UK for asylum seeking women"

"Repeat for all student midwives"

"Useful information to signpost when in practice."

"Eye opening and shocking"



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Following on from the conference in Bradford, the Maternity Stream hosted a meeting, led by the project manager, for Bradford services to meet and discuss what current provisions are, identify gaps and seek solutions. The first action is that steps are being taken to create a much needed specialist care pathway for AS&R women and also an FGM clinic. The Maternity stream has facilitated the space for organisations to meet and think issues through and so form a cohesive approach to taking steps to improve services. We are hoping to hold similar conferences in Leeds and Hull in 2015. The full report is on the website.

Saltaire day out

Aware of the lack of summer holiday activities and outings accessible to AS&R families a day out was organised and led by the project manager.

70 women and children came to Saltaire, played games, shared a picnic and enjoyed being somewhere green compared to the inner city. The picnic was kindly hosted by a local church which the women and children looked round after lunch. As well as a social gathering, informal advice and support was given, particularly notable between a newly arrived family from Syria and other women who had been in the UK for longer. The travel expenses for the day were donated by Ilkley Quaker meeting and other supporters of the Maternity Stream.

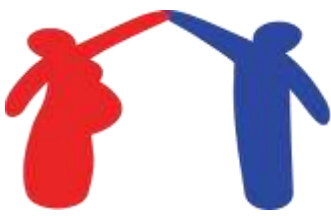


People and the Dales

Maternity Stream volunteers have been on two outings organised by People and the Dales to Malham cove including afternoon tea with a local artist who then came to visit the women in Leeds and sketch portraits of the mothers and babies for them to keep.

6. Maternity Stream Steering Group

The steering group is an open group aimed at developing the work of the Maternity Stream. The quarterly group meeting, chaired by the project manager also provides a rare space for services and service users to raise concerns and discuss issues relating to asylum and maternity care. Since the project manager began in post, the database of interested people in the Maternity stream has grown significantly with a large range of different organisations involved.



7.Resources

Films - "Birth in the UK, stories from Refugees" is a fantastic film aimed at any maternity care providers depicting the first hand stories of AS&R women and so aims to increase awareness of their needs and experiences relevant to providing appropriate maternity care. The AS&R women who starred in the film were involved in the production from start to finish, inputting into all decisions made. A second film aimed specifically at AS&R women about how health care in the UK works and how they can access it is going to be released with the next 10 days. This film will be translated into 8 languages.

Evaluation of the film:

"Emotional, thought provoking, upsetting."

"Heart felt and thought-provoking."

"Powerful!"

"Brilliant film - can see how we could use the film in many contexts."



Training - the maternity stream offers support to services throughout their application for the Service of Sanctuary Award by either providing relevant training or linking up with other training providers. The training is also very much linked to the volunteering opportunities for AS&R women detailed below.

Website - as previously mentioned the website has become a strong resource for anyone working in with pregnant/postnatal AS&R women.

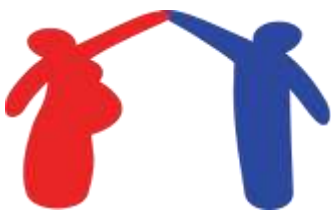
Women's' Stories - personal stories from women explaining why they left their home country, their journey and then having children in the UK. The stories are currently a work in progress.

8.Volunteering

The Maternity stream has provided opportunities for AS&R women to volunteer their time and experiences, sharing their stories at local, national and international conferences and being involved in all the meetings held by the Maternity Stream. The Maternity stream won two prizes for their presentations at the COST international conference on optimising childbirth conference in Brussels.

Volunteering opportunities have also been taken up by student midwives, psychology students and new mothers to come along to events and listen to and write up women's stories. Other volunteer activities have included women sitting as representative on Maternity Services Liaison Committees (MSLC), local Health Watch boards and the University of Bradford Service User Group. Through this group, volunteers have participated in interviewing prospective health care students, teaching and assessing current students and undertaking research projects. This has all helped prepare volunteers to go onto careers in health care professions including support with UCAS application forms.





9. Strengths of the project

- The ability to bring services together from across sectors - creating spaces for statutory and community sector services to meet, share common concerns and good practice.
- Connecting services up within cities and where relevant, across the region.
- Facilitating the sharing of good practice across cities and through conferences, the website, social media and through informal networking
- Providing volunteering opportunities for AS&R women
- Facilitating spaces for AS&R women to represent themselves to decision makers and care providers
- Training AS&R women in presentation skills and public speaking which has greatly boosted confidence, sense of self-worth and promoted good mental health
- Providing training for maternity care providers and third sector organisations, led by AS&R women
- Fostering AS&R volunteers ability to pass on to their peers correct information relating to accessing health and social care
- Developing a bigger picture of what and how maternity care for AS&R women should look like in Yorkshire and Humber

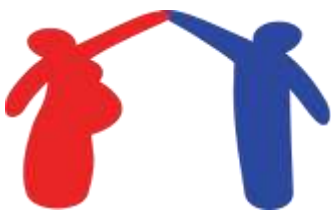


10. Weaknesses

- Only one paid staff member on 7hrs/week finishing in January 2015
- Very limited funding for volunteer travel expenses - this has the potential to jeopardise our ability to ensure that AS&R women are always central to our events and meetings
- In some areas, we rely on indirect relationships and word of mouth to encourage local AS&R women to become involved in the project

11. Key findings

- Support for AS&R women is often lacking, and been cut further and the picture painted by those working 'on the ground' (i.e. midwives and family support workers) is that they have overloaded caseloads, not enough time and not enough support. Due to the specialist and often complicated nature of supporting AS&R women, it seems that only if they are lucky enough to get a really passionate and energetic midwife will a woman receive something like the care they need. This is unless there is such a specialist service, such as Haamla, but this is the only one in Yorkshire and Humber and they too are stretched to capacity.
- There is a lack of time and space for critical reflection of support offered to AS&R women for both statutory and third sector services. However, services which are engaged with the Maternity Stream have increasing access to spaces, such as the regional steering group, for cross-sector reflection on all issues relating to asylum and maternity care. When meeting locally services are brought together, they gain a better understanding of services available for referral.



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- Working with maternity services and refugee organisations to develop and run a local conference, followed by meetings to enable more networking and planning of cohesive services appears an effective model. Other areas are interested in following this model and we are planning to develop a conference in Leeds and Hull in 2015 followed by special interest meetings. The capacity to work in this way is perhaps unique to a project such as the Maternity stream as it is not tied to statutory services but is respected by them and so can effectively engage across sectors.
- The Maternity Service of Sanctuary Award scheme has the potential to facilitate real and noticeable improvements in care. The fact that only one service is ready to receive the award shows that the scheme requires tangible change and improvement which requires effort and commitment from all involved.
- The impact of service users directly representing themselves and sharing their personal stories is profound and incredibly affective. Listening to their stories can be heart-breaking but changes people's perceptions for the better. The volunteers have a capacity to ignite a sense of passion and determination in anyone who hears them speak. Their experience and desire to help is at the heart of Maternity stream.
- Creating spaces for the volunteers to be heard by institutions who offer their support requires confidence and persistence in dealing with large organisations. This has been a strength of the Maternity Stream Project Manager and it is vital we seek out more funding to continue this role, which has had a massive impact on the speed and scope of the work of the Maternity Stream.

12.Looking to the future

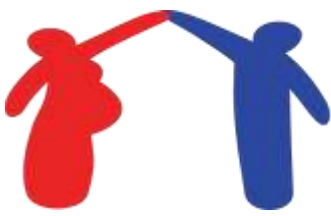
With more funding we aim to:

Short term:

1. Retain and expand the Maternity Stream Project Manager post and provide expenses for volunteers who engage with the project.
2. Maintain regional steering group meetings and increase the geographical range of services involved
3. Increase the number of services applying for and achieving the Maternity Service of Sanctuary award across the patch.
4. Organise events which include film showings and volunteers undertaking presentations to services
5. Share learning from the maternity stream in Yorkshire with City of Sanctuary groups throughout the UK and support them to set up maternity stream of sanctuary groups in their own cities.
6. Encourage city groups to run Excellence in Maternity Care Conferences

Longer term:

1. Hold an award ceremony for successful applicant to the Maternity Service of Sanctuary Award.



2. Continue the follow up work in Bradford, including supporting the development of a specialist care pathway for AS&R pregnant women, an FGM clinic and a peer-support project similar to the Health Befriending project which was based in Leeds.
3. Create more resources for statutory and third sector services to use, including suggestions for training new staff to midwifery teams.
4. Secure funding to pay for volunteer travel costs and encourage participation of local AS&R women when working in cities other than Leeds
5. Re-establish the health befriending scheme which was previously hosted by the refugee council in Leeds but ended in March 2014. Please see the economic report attached.

13. Relevant Links:

Maternity Stream

<http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/maternity>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Maternity-Stream-of-the-City-of-Sanctuary/171038126376597?ref=hl>

Haamla Service - Specialist Midwifery service for BME women in Leeds

<http://www.leedsth.nhs.uk/a-z-of-services/leeds-perinatal-centre/what-we-do/haamla-service/>

CityWise - Leeds Sexual Health <http://www.leedssexualhealth.com/drop-ins>

BEVAN House - Social Enterprise for vulnerable, homeless and refugee and asylum seekers <http://www.bevanhealthcare.nhs.uk/>

People and the Dales - <http://www.ydmt.org/programme-details-people-the-dales-14616>

Sanctuary Summit - <https://sanctuarysummit2014.wordpress.com/>

Sanctuary in Parliament - <http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/news/2542/parliament-celebrating-teh-freedom-speak>