

Briefing summary: Maternal mental health workshop January 2023

An overview of conversations from a workshop on 23rd January 2023 led by Ways to Wellness together with colleagues from the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) North East and North Cumbria (NENC) and Perinatal Mental Health Clinical Network team. A more detailed record of the event is available [here](#).

The workshop brought together colleagues across maternity and mental health to review evaluation activity in the North East and North Cumbria related to maternal mental health through two projects, Ways to Wellness-hosted VCSE Maternal Mental Health Services project and Newcastle University's Designing Accessible Maternal Mental Health Services: The MaMS Study.

A new VCSE-hosted link worker prototype project was launched in North East and North Cumbria (NENC) to support women on their pregnancy journey requiring community support to navigate services, maintain their health and access advice. Key points highlighted:

- A good fit between the findings of the MaMS Study and early findings from the social prescribing link worker prototypes; it was agreed that the model the prototypes are developing is both meeting the needs of mothers with mild to moderate mental health needs and appears to be a complementary service with potential to reduce the demand on midwifery and connected services. Attendees referenced the adage 'it takes a village to raise a child' and the prototypes are beginning to bring this village to life for families.
- It's not just about mothers and babies, lots of the interventions described apply to the whole family. There are opportunities to think about how link worker support might extend to fathers, partners, wider family, work with the wider system, link to Family Hub developments.
- The maternal mental health link worker prototype model works because of collaborative working with VCSE and statutory services, builds on pre-existing organisational relationships, lots of VCSE organisations are now employing link workers, and there is a growing network of PCN-based link workers, and has had co-production as a golden thread.
- Although working with mild to moderate mental health needs the prototypes are alive to the potential for the model to be extended to step up/down support. These are new relationships with VCSE organisations new to working with maternity and perinatal services, requiring building trust between services and developing robust risk management plans. By and large statutory organisations understand how VCSE mental health services work and there is trust and partnership that allows collaboration between sectors to support individuals.
- NHS services want clear lines of engagement when working with the VCSE around risk management and an idea was raised about the statutory sector providing the scaffolding around VCSE risk management. This seems to be being supported in the prototypes in evidence presented about the effectiveness of multi disciplinary teams involving link workers.
- We referenced the flexibility, creativity, openness and honesty inherent in the way the prototypes have been developed. Though developed at place they bring together the four place-based services with a single evaluation framework, link worker learning community and central data dashboard. Described by workshop attendees as a test case for collaborative working in a complex area, developed at place but with regional functionality, and a risk was taken to try something new - value of inviting populations to contribute to how services are delivered particularly highlighted as important.
- We would like to invite you to join us for a follow up event **Wednesday 26th April 2023 from 1 – 4pm in Central Newcastle (venue TBC), if you would like to be sent information to sign up for our event please email ang.broadbridge@waystowellness.org.uk**