

# MATERNITY PROJECT

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In partnership with The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) & Clinical Research Network (CRN), South London.

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## Background

BME women in Croydon suffer poorer maternal health outcomes which affects their lives and the life of their newborns. As BME women are categorised within underserved communities, they experience health inequalities such as poorer physical and mental health, reduced enjoyment and overall quality of life in comparison to their counterparts. They are also less engaged in clinical research, making it more difficult to inform healthcare services on how to improve their health outcomes. In recognition of the need for equity, Croydon BME Forum, CBMEF's Maternity project focuses on addressing the barriers Croydon BME women face when accessing these services.

## Project Rationale

The first phase of the project highlighted the main issues affecting BME women during their pregnancy when accessing maternal healthcare services. This includes a lack of guidance and support during pregnancy (especially for new mothers), difficulty accessing their GP and lack of trust in the NHS.

In this second phase of the project, we aim to uncover the reasons why these issues are occurring and how they can be addressed using a mixed methods approach, collecting qualitative and quantitative data.

This project employs a newly recruited Community Health Champion as an outcome for the first phase of the project as well as a steering group and continuous evaluation to help improve engagement from the Croydon BME women with maternal healthcare services and clinical research.

## Project Aim

Exploring the reasons for these barriers and what can be done about these issues to improve maternal health outcomes for Croydon BME women.

## Methods

- This research project utilises a mixed methods approach to identify the reasons for these barriers and potential solutions suggested by BME women to address these issues. Data is being collected by conducting focus groups, surveys, interviews and will be used to produce reports and case studies.
- Our Community Health Champion will follow the journey of 5 patients along their pregnancy journey and provide support with review at the end.

## Project Progress - Findings to Date

Communities shared their thoughts on what were the causes of the issues identified and potential solutions:

### Potential causes:

- Not feeling valued or cared for - don't feel listened to
- Don't feel supported enough during their pregnancy journey
- Don't feel understood
- Lack of trust of NHS
- Unclear on how to navigate the NHS system
- Need clearer communication from GPs, staff and NHS Departments

### Potential solutions:

- Better support and guidance through women's pregnancy and postnatal
- Community hub
- Community involvement in decision making
- Information sharing with community - transparency
- Clearer communication from GPs, staff and NHS Departments
- Training of staff (e.g. cultural competence, respect)
- Resource management - more salary to midwives and other maternal professionals

## Next Steps for this Project

Recommendations from this research to date include: a more targeted approach to reach more BME women who are pregnant and postnatal; case studies to gain a more in-depth understanding; co-design resources with the community that provide guidance on pregnancy, maternal healthcare services and local community organisations/ other maternal services. BME women have also expressed the need for additional ongoing support where the Community Health Champion, through training of midwives, will be able to provide additional 1:1 support for those who are pregnant including non-clinical advice and signposting to specific local community groups. Through further research and providing support this project will help empower BME women for their pregnancy and motherhood.

In response to queries raised we are taking the following action:

- Support from Community Health Champion during their pregnancy journey (with review)
- Community Hub: for information sharing, signposting, promotion of engagement in clinical research and general community support
- Development of resources for information sharing and signposting - especially during pregnancy and postnatal
- Events that involve two way communication between NHS midwives and representatives and community members
- Collaborating with community groups that provide maternity support

Through further research and providing support this project will help empower BME women for their pregnancy and motherhood.

