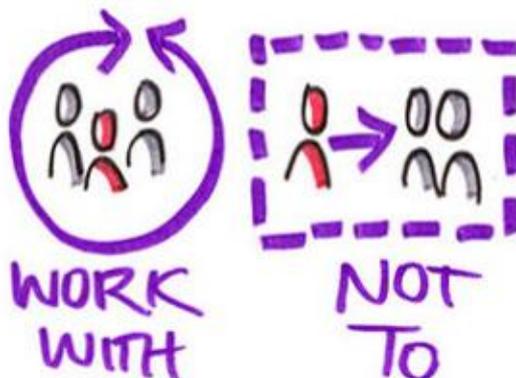


## Women and families coproducing maternity care in South East London



The [implementation of Better Births](#) requires coproduction and the inclusion of women and their families in the design and delivery of their care. Coproduction is built on the principle that those who use a service are best placed to help design it. Maternity Voices Partnerships (MVPs) provide the ideal platform for coproduction. These partnerships are made up of women, families, voluntary sector representatives, commissioners and providers (midwives and doctors) working together to review and contribute to the development of local maternity care. In South East London, which covers the boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, the Local Maternity System has also embraced the idea of coproduction with its six MVPs.

In Lewisham, the MVP has demonstrated how effective coproduction can be, resulting in really positive outcomes for local women. Lewisham MVP identified a need for improved support for women experiencing mental health issues in pregnancy and/or after the birth of their baby. Working closely with the Lewisham specialist midwifery team for mental health, the MVP Chair and the Public Health midwife set up focus groups of women to listen to their lived experience and use their words to describe what mental ill-health feels like.



After hearing from the focus group, a [webpage](#) was developed. Using women's own words, this aims to signpost pregnant women, new mothers and their partners having similar experiences with mental health issues to a range of local support services.



**Pregnant or had a baby?  
It's ok not to feel ok**



Your feelings matter  
We are here to help  
If you don't feel ok  
talk to your midwife  
GP or health visitor,  
or go to this website:

[www.lewisham.gov.uk/notfeelingok](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/notfeelingok)

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This project is an example of true coproduction; trust providers working with the women who use the service to codesign improvements. This outreach work by the MVP was instrumental in securing funding for a fixed-term, specialist perinatal mental health midwife and a 2 year peer-support programme aimed at promoting good mental health and wellbeing.

The link between MVPs and the Local Maternity Systems is a new concept, as the systems only recently emerged alongside the publication of *Better Births*. However, representatives from each of the six MVPs in South East London have a standing invitation to the LMS Board and their input is highly valued. MVP chairs and service user representatives have also been engaged with writing and reviewing the SEL LMS Better Births implementation plan. MVP service user representatives are also involved in working groups on continuity of care, digital maternity systems and public health with members to also be included in working groups awaiting setup.

Going forward, it is expected that the partnership and the system will continue to influence one another. LMS priorities may inform MVPs and reciprocally MVP local priorities may feed



into LMS actions. For continued success, it is vital that each MVP retain their autonomy to agree local priorities for local families. Recently, Bromley MVP concluded their three top local priorities that best reflect their community. These were:

- Increasing awareness around choice of place of birth
- Increasing awareness and support for survivors of abuse.
- Increasing breastfeeding support

Each of these three priorities fits into one of the Better Births/LMS themes but also reflects local need.

Coproduction is only possible in South East London if MVPs are funded and if logistical/practical arrangements are in place. South East London LMS understands the value of MVPs and equally understands that MVPs cannot work effectively and efficiently without adequate resources. In line with the Better Births resource pack, the LMS has produced a document on Funding arrangements for South East London MVPs, which sets out what each individual MVP budget should cover and who is responsible for ensuring that the funds are in place. Funding arrangements in the document were agreed and developed with the assistance of the MVP chairs. A funding template has also been devised, which chairs can use to submit proposed budgets to their CCGs going forward. These budgets will be approved by the LMS before being submitted to the CCGs, essentially meaning that each MVP will have the support of the LMS in its bid for funding each year.

Practically speaking, the LMS also needs to facilitate MVP service user representatives being able to attend LMS meetings. This includes, making meetings manageable for mothers, women and families by reimbursing MVP representatives for their time, travel/childcare expenses and holding meetings within school hours and term time.

In the future, we are hoping to achieve true coproduction, in which service users are involved in proposal writing and annual operational plans are developed and agreed with the MVP in the LMS. It is evident that there is a lot of opportunity to increase the involvement of MVPs within South East London. The Local Maternity System has clearly seen the value and potential of Maternity Voices Partnerships in making Better Births a reality.

Further information:

There are MVPs throughout England. If you would like to find and get involved in your local MVP, visit [www.nationalmaternityvoices.org.uk/toolkit-for-mvps/find-an-mvp/](http://www.nationalmaternityvoices.org.uk/toolkit-for-mvps/find-an-mvp/) or connect via Twitter (@NatMatVoicesorg) or via [Facebook](#)

