

Improving Maternity Care For Black African & Black Caribbean Women

healthwatch
Birmingham

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What did we want to do?

Improve maternity services in West Birmingham so Black African and Black Caribbean receive more person-centred and culturally-competent care.

Healthwatch Birmingham was receiving feedback about variability in the quality of care provided by maternity services at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust (SWBH), particularly for service users from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds.

What needed to change?

Black African and Black Caribbean women are seldom heard groups, so had to be engaged in an appropriate fashion. We recruited participants through visits to Sure Start centres, GP surgeries and City Hospital in West Birmingham. In-depth and culturally-appropriate interviews with 26 service users revealed the following specific issues:

- Lack of continuity of carer leading to anxiety and inability to discuss issues such as mental health.
- Failure to be referred to midwives by their GP, which delayed screening and scans.
- Poor staff attitudes and behaviour.
- Lack of access to interpreters or translators.
- Not feeling they had real choice around where to give birth, and what type of birth to have.

What did we achieve?

Women said they wanted '*personal and individualised care, ensuring staff are listening to the needs of women and taking them into account.*'

Following the report, we liaised extensively with staff at SWBH to help them engage with seldom heard groups at listening events.



What did we achieve?

Increasing the number of midwives from Black African backgrounds, to ensure maternity services better reflect the communities they serve.

Hiring a Best Start Midwife, attached to GP surgeries in areas with high numbers of Black African and Black Caribbean families, to provide better continuity of carer.

Employing a Patient Experience Midwife to capture and respond to patient feedback.

Introducing on-the-spot virtual interpreters in maternity and neonatal services, in addition to current telephone and in-person interpretation services.

'Drop in' antenatal classes without the need to pre-book, to improve access for ethnically diverse and digitally excluded families.

Wider impact

Our findings have informed the work of other stakeholders and organisations including:

- Birmingham & Solihull Local Maternity & Neonatal System (BUMP)
- Birmingham & Solihull Maternity Voices Partnership
- Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care Board
- Healthwatch England

SWBH has also shared its action plan with other local maternity services, to ensure every new family in Birmingham can get appropriate care.

The report by Healthwatch Birmingham, provided Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust maternity services additional valuable insight into the experiences of families using our services. The report was balanced yet comprehensive in detailing what works well for the families we serve alongside what does not, therefore enabling us to work towards implementing the recommendations set out in the report.

- Afrah Muflihi, Midwife, SWBH