

Role Profile: Parent Partners for Black Maternity Matters Project

1. What is the West of England Academic Health Science Network?

The West of England Academic Health Science Network is one of 15 across the country. It is also known as West of England AHSN.



The West of England Academic Health Science Network is one of 15 across the country. It was set up in 2013 by NHS England and brings together people working to improve healthcare. The network (where lots of people or things join together) includes:

- Members of the public, including people with experience of using services
- NHS organisations – for example hospitals and community care providers, such as GPs
- Physical and mental health services
- Social care
- Industry – for example organisations with good innovations (new ways of doing things)
- Academic – for example universities
- Voluntary organisations

An important focus of our work is in improving patient safety, as well as supporting the NHS to find solutions and new technology. We also work with the other networks across the country to share successful solutions.

2. What is the Black Maternity Matters Project?

Black Maternity Matters is a ground-breaking collaboration aimed at supporting midwives to reduce the inequitable outcomes faced by black mothers in our maternity systems. It will support maternity systems to offer safer, equitable care for all.

This project is being driven by the evidence that;

- Black women are 4 times more likely to die during pregnancy or in the postnatal period than white women (Knight et al 2019 MBRRACE-UK).
- Stillbirth rates of Black and Black British babies are over twice those for White babies (Muglu et al 2019).

We also know that there are 'near misses', instances of poor care and psychological impact which further adds to the negative experience of many Black women during pregnancy and post-natal care.

While there are examples of excellent work happening around the country, the West of England has not yet developed a dedicated strategy to improve outcomes for Black pregnant women and their babies. Where training and education is offered, maternity staff are often left with no clear steps on how to introduce and test potential changes and improvements.

By setting up a supportive collaborative for maternity staff, offering peer support, education and training, and coaching in quality improvement (QI), the Black Maternity Matters project seeks to change this.

3. Who are we working with?

Inspired by Black Mothers Matter's vision that one day Black mothers will no longer be disproportionately in danger during pregnancy and the first year after birth, Black Maternity Matters has been developed by the West of England AHSN in partnership with Representation Matters and BCohCo.

Ten midwives from maternity hospitals in the West of England are coming together to form a regional collaborative, providing psychological safety and peer support in which to explore the issues facing Black mothers and what changes can be made in how we provide maternity services and care.

Making sure we have Parent Partners working alongside us will ensure that all voices are heard and are able to contribute to making positive change.

4. Why do we want to work with parent partners?

An important part of our work is in improving patient safety, working together to make things better in a joined-up, and 'system-wide' way. Every day the NHS treats millions of people successfully, but healthcare is complex, and sometimes things still do go wrong. We want to work together to continuously improve care.

Listening to and working with people who have experience of our services including their families, will help make sure that these improvements focus on what matters most to people who use them. In order to do this it is important that we include people who have experience of using services in our work and decision-making

For this project, we are bringing together midwives, voluntary sector groups and diversity, inclusivity, cohesion and equality experts to design a brand-new approach to improving care for black women and their families. Putting women and their families at the heart of the design process will ensure that the project will be delivered to improve outcomes for black women and their babies.

5. What would it involve?

We are looking for parent partners to join our project steering group. This would mean:

- Attend meetings once a month as full members of the project steering group;
- Be “a voice” for patients and families; this could include for example:
 - Sharing how it may feel for people using maternity services, and what can help them feel safer;
 - Providing an opinion on what matters most to people using maternity services;
 - Sharing what feels unsafe to people using maternity services;
 - Commenting on and giving suggestions on information designed for people using maternity services, this could include written information, images, and videos.
 - Constructively challenging to make sure that improvements get it right for people using maternity services.
- Provide peer support to other parent partners, so that everyone feels supported included, and able to contribute.

6. Equality and Diversity

We are committed to understanding the impact of our work on all members of our communities and for our work to reflect the different people who use healthcare in our local area.

We are committed to actively engaging with and involving, diverse communities in our work, ensuring we include people from marginalised and seldom-heard groups.

For these parent partner roles, we want to hear from people who have lived experience of maternity services either as a patient or family member.

We are keen that these roles are open to all, and that anyone interested feels able to apply, irrespective of personal circumstances. We are happy to work with you both during the recruitment process and once you start. Please contact us directly if you want to discuss further: nathalie.delaney@nhs.net

7. Commitment

Parent Partners will need to commit to around one day every month until November 2022. There may be more opportunities to be involved beyond the regular Project Steering Group Meetings such as one-off task groups looking at a particular part of the project. We may also change the frequency of Project Steering Group meetings to every two months for example, if the pace of work changes as the project develops.

You will need access to the internet, and a quiet place to take part in online meetings. We meet online using Microsoft Teams or Zoom platforms, with all correspondence between us by email. If this could be something that stops you taking part, please do let us know.

Subject to government guidance, we plan to continue with virtual meetings.

8. Payment and expenses

We make sure parent partners are paid for their time and travel. Payments will be processed by the Royal United Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (“the RUH”). We are currently liaising with the RUH regarding the payment mechanism and clarification on the income tax position. If you are receiving any state benefits e.g. Universal Credit you are advised to contact the Department of Work and Pensions as you may have to declare any payments to them.

9. Induction and ongoing support

All new patient partners attend an induction session before they start, so that they understand the expectations of their role, how the organisation works, style of meetings, how to contribute effectively, and expenses and payment.

10. About you

You will ideally have experience of using NHS maternity services either yourself, or a member of your family. You will identify as a black person or of mixed black heritage. This is important because we want to make sure that project is informed fully by representatives of the black community.

We are looking for people who have experience of working with other people on a common challenge. This could be in your work or personal life, for example being part of a community group.

We are looking for people who are comfortable using their experiences to broaden knowledge and understanding in the wider group, be part of a collective voice of Black women and birthers and acting as an advocate for others. There may be some discussions that are more sensitive or involve discussions of other patient's care, and we would ask that requests for keeping private information confidential are respected.

You will need access to the internet and basic IT skills;

We are looking for people who share our values around making a difference, working with others, listening and learning from each other. Find out more at <https://www.weahsn.net/about-us/our-values/>

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