

Rights-Issues in Maternity Care for Women Experiencing Severe and Multiple Disadvantage: Information sheet for specialist midwives' focus group participants

We would like to invite you to take part in a focus group as part of a study that investigates the human rights challenges experienced during maternity care by women facing severe and multiple disadvantage. The project aims to identify the most serious and frequent issues which arise for women during their maternity care, and propose policy and practice changes to address them.

We are running focus groups with specialist and non-specialist midwives, birth supporters, and with social workers to understand their experiences and the challenges they face in supporting women with complex needs. In addition to these focus groups, we are interviewing women who have recent experience of maternity care whilst facing severe and multiple disadvantage.

For the purposes of this study, we are using *severe and multiple disadvantage* to refer to sets of co-presenting needs, which may include:

- Housing problems, poverty and/or no access to public funds
- Perinatal mental health problems
- Physical and/or learning disabilities
- Substance misuse
- Social services involvement, or history of safeguarding issues
- Experiences of asylum, immigration and/or trafficking
- Isolation
- History of domestic abuse, sexual violence, human rights violations
- Experience of detention or imprisonment
- Language issues
- Experience of sex work

Who can take part?

We are seeking midwives who have specialist experience supporting women in London who face severe and multiple disadvantage during pregnancy or childbirth. For example, you may be a midwife specialising in supporting vulnerable women or those dealing with substance abuse issues, young mothers, migrant and asylum seeking women, or be specialist in safeguarding. This is a non-exhaustive list: please get in touch if you are unsure about whether you are eligible and/or would like to discuss further. We are also recruiting non-specialist midwives for a separate focus group.

What does taking part involve?

If you choose to take part, you will be asked to join a focus group of roughly six to eight people. We will ask you to discuss various issues regarding your experiences of supporting

women facing multiple and complex disadvantage. The focus group will be held in a venue in London near public transport, and will take no more than two hours in total.

What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?

We hope that taking part in the focus group will be interesting to you, and provide a space to share your experiences. There are no known risks to taking part, but we recognise that discussing these issues, and particularly your own experiences can be difficult. You are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any point until the report is finalised, which includes leaving the focus group after it has begun. If you withdraw during or after the focus group, any information you provided would not be included in the study.

We are able to reimburse travel costs and will offer light refreshments. You will be offered a £10 voucher as a thank you, and we can send you a copy of the final report if you wish.

Will my participation be kept confidential?

The focus group format means that your participation will be known to other participants, and we therefore cannot guarantee total anonymity. We ask that all those taking part respect the confidentiality of the group, and our records will be kept strictly confidential.

The focus group will be audio recorded for the purposes of transcription and you will be asked to indicate that you understand this before the group begins. Please note that it will unfortunately not be possible for you to take part if you do not wish to be recorded. The audio file will be securely destroyed after transcription. The data you provide will be held in accordance with GDPR, and any information used in publications will be anonymised to avoid the potential of you or the women for whom you have cared being identified.

How is the project being funded?

The research project is a collaboration between the charities Birthrights and Birth Companions, funded by Trust for London. Birthrights is the UK's only organisation dedicated to improving women's experience of pregnancy and childbirth by promoting respect for human rights. Birth Companions is the UK's leading organisation supporting women experiencing severe disadvantage during pregnancy, birth and early parenting.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings of each of the focus groups and the interviews with women will be used in a report, which will make recommendations for local and national policy and practice change. This report will be published on the Birthrights and Birth Companions websites, publicised at a launch event, and shared with policymakers and healthcare practitioners, as well as the funders. It will also be used to inform future training and resource work within Birthrights and Birth Companions, all aimed at improving the maternity experiences of women facing severe and multiple disadvantage.

For more information contact:

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