



Working in partnership to improve maternity & neonatal services

Transcript of Chair role YouTube video

Thanks for your interest in the role of chair of Royal Berkshire Maternity Voices Partnership.

I'm Emma, the outgoing chair, and I wanted to answer some questions that you might have about the role if you're thinking about applying.

What is the Maternity Voices partnership?

The Maternity voices partnership or MVP is an independent group. We are funded by the Local Maternity and Neonatal System which is part of the NHS, but we're not funded by the Trust which runs the hospital, which is really important because that means we can be independent, and we are led by parents.

So I am a parent, as the chair, and so is our vice chair and our secretary, and we have a team of parent reps as well.

We are made up of, as a group, of the parents but also of members of staff at the Trust - the hospital - and also from the Local Maternity and Neonatal System, and other stakeholders such as Health Visiting, the Breastfeeding Network, GPs, our maternity non-executive director, a hospital governor; we have a wide variety of people who attend our meetings, and we work together to improve local maternity services at the Royal Berkshire hospital.

We do that by listening to feedback from people who use the services across the whole of our patch. That's the crux of our work, to go out into the community and listen to people and identify from that feedback things that would make maternity services better, and sometimes these will be small things, sometimes they will be big things and then we just work together to progress those forward and to keep identifying new quality improvement projects.

What is the role of the Chair?

The role of the chair is primarily home based but you can't do it all from home. There are some occasions when you need to go into the hospital and also to go out into the community but most of the meetings are done on Teams so you can do those from home or even from your phone. Our Vice Chair quite often logs into meetings in her car on the school run, and that's completely doable.

I have a regular meeting with the hospital Chief Nurse, and that's about once every six weeks. And also there are meetings with people like the Director of Midwifery, the Head of Midwifery and the consultant midwives and those can be maybe monthly and it would really be up to the new role holder to decide what worked best. Obviously, you can have those on Teams but I've found that working face to face really helps building the relationships and getting to know people, and also just being really familiar with the hospital and having that opportunity to say 'let's go have a look at this particular place where an issue is', which you can't do from home, but the majority of your work will

be from home and it's actually really quite flexible, apart from the meetings which are obviously on set days and times.

How much do I need to know about the NHS and maternity?

In this role, it is helpful to have an understanding of what I call the maternity landscape, which is how things work both locally and regionally and nationally, but you don't actually have to have that knowledge to apply for this role and be successful. It's something you can learn as you go along.

There are plenty of people around you who will know all of the relevant documents and the background and be able to help fill you in as and when you need that. There's also some reading that you'd be able to do, some particular reports - the Ockenden report, the Kirkup East Kent report, and the single delivery plan are the key reports at the moment. And another piece of really good background reading is the Better Births report.

What is the aim of the MVP?

The aim of the MVP is to improve local maternity services, at heart that's basically it but obviously we split that out into our work plan, which has a number of different aims and objectives on it and then under those we have a number of different projects that might be happening, and they could be very quick projects or they could be much longer term.

What support is available in the role?

Maternity Voices Partnerships occupy an unusual space in that we are not employees of the NHS. We sit just outside in order to be independent but we are funded by the local maternity system which is part of the NHS.

So in terms of support, there aren't any obvious lines of reporting, because as chair of the MVP, there's nobody above you in that sense, but there's support first of all from the core team of the MVP, from the vice chair and secretary, and we regularly meet and have gatherings usually at the moment in our secretary's home to accommodate her youngest child. And that's a really nice time when we can share challenges and work through projects and things that we need to talk about.

There's also support available through our colleagues in the trust - the Director of Midwifery, the Head of Midwifery, the consultant midwives are all people that we work really closely with and as chair you would be able to go to them if you had concerns or a problem. And there's also colleagues in the Local Maternity and Neonatal System as well. And again, we can talk to them and they will offer support.

There's also support from your peers, other MVP chairs. So there's the chairs of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Maternity Voices Partnerships. We're in the same Local Maternity and Neonatal System, which is called BOB for Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, and we have a WhatsApp group, but also meet regularly to have working lunches and to share our challenges, share resources, and just generally make our lives easier and give each other emotional support as well.

The next level up from that is the South East region's team. There's a service user voice lead, which is currently me and I offer support to all of the chairs in the South East region, both through group work - we have regular monthly teams calls, we also have a WhatsApp group - but equally I do one to one support with MVP chairs in the South East as well. So there's that level of support.

And beyond that there areWhatsapps and Facebook groups that are hosted by National Maternity Voices, which is the organisation by and for MVP chairs, and there's lots of support in there from chairs all across England, who, again can share their expertise and good practice and also just listen to the challenges, and there's a wider group of chairs and all sorts of MVP members, and then there's a closed group just for MVP chairs as well, which is a really safe space. So there's actually a lot of different levels of support.

And the Local Maternity and Neonatal System is also setting up some specific support for the chairs in our area. So I think there's a lot of support for you in this role, even though there's not a person that you report to in the sense that you might do in a more traditional job.

Who would I be working with?

The key people that you'll be working with are the service users, the people who use the service, that's really important, and the communities in our patch, but also organisations, third sector organisations within our area who work with groups that we want to hear from. We don't do it all ourselves. We work with people like the Cowshed, Utulivu, Reading Community Learning Centre, and others.

Obviously, within the Trust, we're working with our professional colleagues, health professionals, and we're also working with the senior leadership of the Trust so the Chief Nurse who I meet regularly.

We also work with our colleagues at the LMNS, Local Maternity and Neonatal System, and we do lots of work with them. So really, you're working with a wide variety of people and to do this role you need to be comfortable talking to absolutely anybody.

Final thoughts

I hope that's answered some of the main questions that you might have about this role. And I'd really encourage you to apply if you think that it's something that would interest you. The main thing that you need is a real passionate interest in improving local maternity services and everything else can be learned on the job. I've learned so much in this role.

There's plenty of opportunities in this role for developing both personally and professionally. I started this role with very little knowledge of maternity services other than that I had had two babies, and I wanted to make improvements based on the experiences that I had had with the Royal Berkshire Hospital , and I've learnt everything else, really, as I've gone along and there's lots of support to do that. We have an MVP budget that allows for training for our members so there's opportunities to do training.

There's also lots of opportunities to meet up with regional colleagues and colleagues nationally to learn different skills. There's lots of access to webinars so there's plenty of scope to develop yourself if what you want is a really fulfilling, interesting role working with some really great people locally that fits around your family and your commitments.

So I hope that answers questions that you might have had about this role. And if you're thinking about applying, then I'd really encourage you to do that. We'd really love to have a chat with you. Find out a bit more about you and what you can bring and answer any more questions that you might have.

This has genuinely been the most interesting and fulfilling role that I've done. It's a fantastic role that works around the family, that really makes you feel like you're doing something valuable for your community, and connects you to so many people and has, if you want, the opportunity to develop yourself so much.

So if you think that this is something that would interest you, then please fill in the application form. And let's have a chat because we'd love to hear from you.

ENDS