

# Newsletter

Issue 2

December 2021

## Hi Everyone

As we approach the end of 2021, we thought we'd share an update of our year of parent, patient and public involvement and engagement at the Policy Research Unit in Maternal and Neonatal Health and Care (PRU-MNHC).

Our vision is for the views and experiences of women, their partners and families to be at the heart of the work of the PRU-MNHC, in support of the principle of 'no research about us without us'. Our key aim is to empower parent, patient and public involvement and engagement (PPPIE) partners from a variety of backgrounds to join with researchers in shared decision making to shape different stages and aspects of research projects. We will summarise our work in an annual report and aim to continuously improve our communications so that our research can be understood by everyone. Our strategy for PPPIE at the PRU-MNHC will be added to [our website](#) in the next few weeks.

Thank you to all those PPPIE partners who have already helped us with its development. It aims to be a 'live' document and we will continue to consult with you throughout the PRU-MNHC programme on its development and evaluation.

## THE NATIONAL MATERNITY SURVEY

The PRU-MNHC has published England's National Maternity Survey (NMS) findings, focusing on the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on women's health and care during pregnancy, birth and up to 6 months after their baby was born. It shows a big drop in women's satisfaction with their postnatal care with a rise in levels of anxiety and depression postnatally. However, satisfaction with care during pregnancy and birth remained high despite the fact that many women faced changes to their care as a result of the pandemic.

We were heavily involved in developing the accompanying infographics (see attached) and many of the points you have made to us in both formal and informal conversations were fed into these.

The full report **can be found here** along with a short video summarising the key findings.

*You & your Baby*  
A national survey of health and care

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

For those of you who are less familiar with our work, the PRU-MNHC undertakes research which informs Department of Health policy to deliver the best care for mothers and their babies. Our current programme runs from 2019 to 2024. One of the attachments is a list of all the work we have published in the last two years.

## OUR PPIE STRATEGY – ENGAGING AND INVOLVING YOU

Our **strategy** sets out activities to put people at the heart of our research. This year we have focused on widening our PPIE partner network to ensure it is more representative of the whole population. We have done this by inviting new organisations and individuals to join our network.

We now engage up to 100 organisations and individuals, representing a wide variety of maternity experiences, including fathers, LGBTQ parents, parents with disabilities and parents from different ethnic backgrounds. If you are aware of a particular organisation, group or health condition you feel is underrepresented, please let us know.

## KEEPING YOU INFORMED

We now publish regular blogs to update the public on our work. These have included:

- The impact of COVID-19 on pregnant **women** and **babies**
- Professor Jenny Kurinczuk, head of the PRU-MNHC, talking about **how parents' voices are reflected in our work programme**
- How we can make it easier for **the public** to get involved in our research

If there are any topics you particularly want to hear more about, if you would like to write a blog yourself or be interviewed for a podcast, email us at [npeuppie@ox.ac.uk](mailto:npeuppie@ox.ac.uk)

## LISTENING SERIES – HEARING DIRECTLY FROM YOU

We've been improving our understanding of what parents, patients and the public need from us in order to feel included in our research. We did this by running a **Listening Series**. This comprised several online discussions with small groups, funded by a grant from the University of Oxford's Departmental Public Engagement with Research Seed Fund.

Five themes stood out from these conversations:

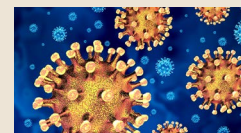
1. Build trust and relationships
2. Involve people from the beginning of the research cycle, not just at the end
3. Show people how our research has impact that is meaningful to them, such as improved health services and experiences
4. Communicate in ways that are appropriate for each audience we're aiming to reach
5. Be sensitive to other pressures people have in their lives, and make engagement and involvement as easy as possible

As a result of this we've developed written guidance and a film to improve researcher skills in public engagement and involvement. We have piloted both in a university seminar with students and early career researchers in our department and are considering other ways to get these important messages to more audiences. We will share this with you early next year once it's been shared with those who contributed to the Series.



## TALKING ABOUT...COVID-19

This year, some of you contributed your views about research we're undertaking so that we can improve the messaging and dissemination for these studies. We held online meetings to discuss the lay report for the **TIGAR** project focusing on the impact of prematurity, and the relationship between women's expectations of their postnatal care and their actual postnatal care.



We also wanted to give you the opportunity to put questions to researchers and discuss their research. We are calling these sessions 'Talking About...' and we held the first one in November. Professor Marian Knight and neonatologist and PRU co-investigator Dr Chris Gale talked through the latest COVID-19 research with anyone who wanted to attend.

These one-hour, online 'Talking About...' sessions will continue through 2022. If there are any particular topics or pieces of research you'd like to discuss in this way (have a look at the attached list for some ideas) let us know by emailing [npeuppi@ox.ac.uk](mailto:npeuppi@ox.ac.uk)

## TAKING TO THE STAGE

Since 2017, three of our PRU researchers, Rachel Rowe, Fiona Alderdice and Marian Knight, have been working with a writer, Zena Forster, and her theatre company, Maiden Moor Productions, to develop a play about maternal mental health. The play, *after birth*, was premiered in Oxford earlier this year and will be performed at the **VAULT festival** in London from 3rd-6th March 2022. Tickets are on sale now. This is what the critics are saying:

*"A powerhouse story told with clarity, wit and integrity"* Daily Information

*Betrayed by family, sectioned and lactating, Ann and her new-born have been detained without trial on a medieval plague island. We are inside the world of Ann's head – when she's scared, we're scared, when she sees the funny side we're laughing. Winner of the North Wall Oxford's Propeller Award, this dark new comedy is rooted in the recovery stories of the many resilient, funny women who experienced psychosis after the birth of their babies and fearlessly shared their stories with the production. Imaginatively staged, with elements of stand-up comedy, a dynamic sound design and original music, 'after birth' is a story of recovery and hope.*

*"What a joy"* – Ruth Carney @DirectorRuth

## ALL THE BEST FOR 2022

We very much hope you and your families are well. We really appreciate all the support you have given to parent, patient and public involvement at the PRU-MNHC this year, and we look forward to working with you again in 2022.

In the meantime there are some free resources for patient and public representatives on the **NIHR website** and the **HealthTalk online** website.

Here's to a happy, healthy and productive new year.

With best wishes

**Charlotte and Rachel**

Co-leads for Parent, Patient and Public Involvement (PPPIE)

Policy Research Unit in Maternal and Neonatal Health and Care (PRU-MNHC)

Oxford Population Health, (Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford)

National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit (NPEU)

