

# Physical Activity in Maternity Berkshire Evaluation Report 2023-2024





**Becoming a new mother can be a wonderful, but often challenging time, with mental and physical health being impacted during pregnancy and after childbirth. Being physically active can boost mood and self esteem, as well as reducing the risk of depression and stress.**

At least 1 in 5 women develop a mental illness during pregnancy or within the first year after having a baby and suicide is the leading cause of death during the first year after pregnancy. Physical activity (PA) data from Sport England shows us that activity levels in those who are pregnant or with a child under 1 are lower than those who are not pregnant/do not have a young child.

**Get Berkshire Active (GBA) aims to support women across Berkshire suffering with perinatal mental health conditions to access regular opportunities to stay active throughout pregnancy and beyond by:**

- working with healthcare professionals and other workforces in the perinatal space to support with expertise and advice
- changing cultures and embedding PA within maternity pathways
- breaking down barriers to engagement with PA during the preconception, pregnancy and the postnatal life stages
- championing the PA needs of women throughout childbearing years.

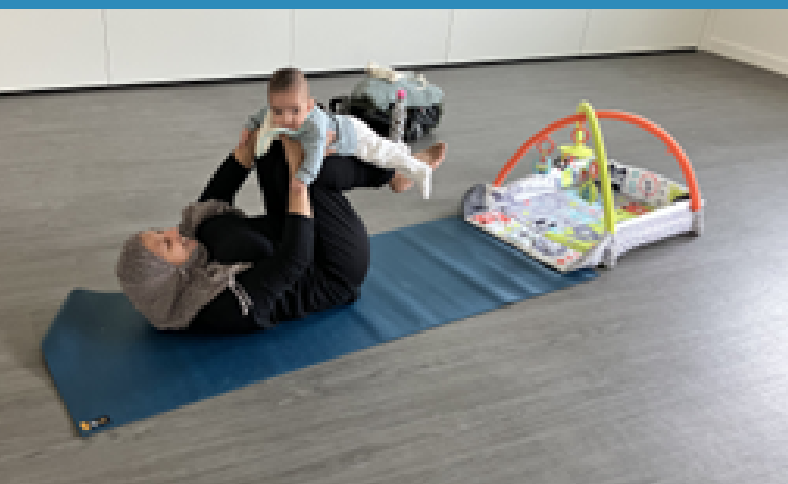
Through various avenues we aim to support women with mental health problems to become more physically active and adopt a more active lifestyle as a daily habit. We also want to support a change in the maternity system by providing high quality training opportunities to equip workforces with the skills, knowledge and confidence to have regular conversations about PA throughout a woman's journey from early pregnancy to the postnatal period.

## It started in 2019...

...when GBA was awarded £10,000 for a mental health project in Slough called Mums' Zone. After her own experience of postnatal depression, project lead Cathy Carr wanted to support new mums with their own mental wellbeing by providing a regular safe space they could come and be active, as this was something she found was lacking in her own community.

Since then the project has adapted and involved into what it is today; a holistic offer for both pregnant women and new mums along with training and support for various healthcare professional workforces. With local classes in the community, This Mum Moves Ambassador training programme, a PA in maternity network, a quarterly Early Years and Maternity newsletter and various resource support”.

Where referring to 'women', 'mothers' or 'mums', this should be taken to include people who do not identify as female but who are pregnant or have given birth.





# Physical Activity in Maternity journey

## 2019

GBA used the grant to pilot **'Mum's Zone'** in partnership with Places Leisure; providing a **holistic health and wellbeing intervention** for new mums with the aim of improving mental and physical health through a programme consisting of low-moderate intensity physical activity (e.g. yoga and Pilates initially) and wellbeing support, messaging, and signposting. This also offered mums an opportunity to get together in a comfortable setting aiding **social networking and peer support**.



## 2021

Following the success of the pilot in 2019, Frimley Preconception and Maternity Group (part of the Integrated Care Board) and the Sports Council Trust Company funded a **scaled-up intervention** across Slough.

## 2023-24

As well as offering physical activity opportunities in the community, GBA's maternity support in Berkshire has diversified to include

- a training offer to different workforces through the This Mum Moves Ambassador Training
- a resource hub for both mums and professionals
- a Berkshire wide Physical Activity in Maternity Network
- Quarterly Physical Activity in Maternity newsletter



This intervention was **independently evaluated** by the Perinatal Physical Activity Research Group at Canterbury Christ Church University. Sessions took place across 4 settings in Slough and Wokingham.

The face-to-face programme was a huge success and despite Covid-19 and lockdown 6 months later, the programme went online with the introduction of **weekly pregnancy classes**.

## 2021-23

The programme grew significantly in terms of the number of venues and women attending so a **collaboration was formed with Sport in Mind** who were commissioned to lead on the delivery programme.



The collaborative partnership with Sport in Mind provided weekly PA opportunities in the community for pregnant women and new mums, experiencing poor mental health from low mood to more serious mental health conditions such as Postnatal Depression, to help improve those conditions.

## 2023-24

We're now on our 7th commissioned TMM Ambassador training course, have recently held a successful event for Maternal Mental Health Awareness week for mums and babies and are developing closer links to the early years sector.



# A holistic offer in Berkshire

The physical activity in maternity work has developed over the years into a holistic offer which aligns with GBA's strategic pillars; workforce, interventions, networks, system change and learning.

## Physical activity in the community

Sport in Mind provide safe, inclusive pregnancy and postnatal free weekly classes across 4 local authority areas with **197 sessions delivered to 176 mums** experiencing mental health problems between Sept 23-Jul 24.



## Physical Activity in Maternity Berkshire Network

in place since September 2022 to share local and national guidance, understand local need, opportunities and encourage collaborative working.



## Physical Activity in Early Years & Maternity Newsletter

**over 250 people** receive a quarterly newsletter where we celebrate local successes, latest guidance and help raise awareness of key dates and opportunities.



## This Mum Moves Ambassador training

Working with the Institute of Health Visiting and The Active Pregnancy Foundation to offer an educational programme, empowering women to make informed PA choices throughout pregnancy and beyond by providing professionals with the tools to discuss PA during childbearing years. **119 different workforces trained with over 50% being healthcare professionals.**

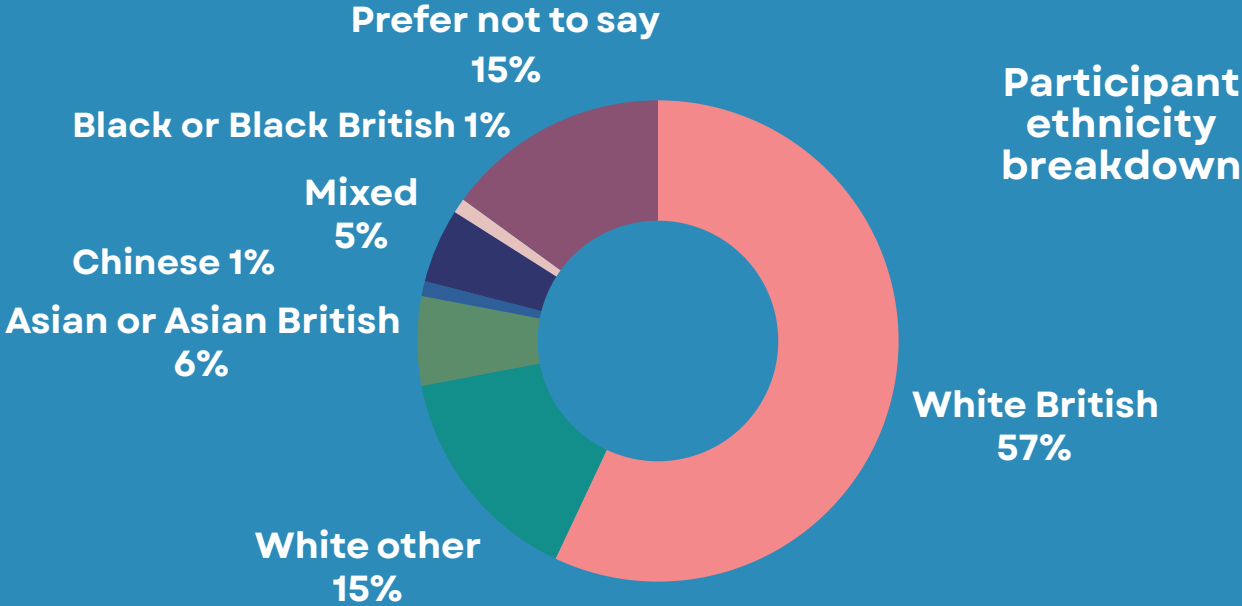
**Resource support** a great range of resources for individuals and professionals  
**Visit the hub**

# Pregnancy and postnatal community classes: September 2023- July 2024

197 sessions were delivered, providing free weekly opportunities to 176 pregnant and postnatal women, with 790 total attendances



Classes delivered by Sport in Mind provided opportunities in the community for pregnant women and new mums, experiencing any mental health condition, to participate in regular free weekly inclusive activity to support wellbeing. Classes were run in various locations across Slough, Maidenhead, Reading and Bracknell Forest.





# Participant and Instructor feedback



“I've really really appreciated these sessions. I have always struggled with my mental health and I had a very traumatic birth both physically and mentally. It has been **so important to have a safe place** to reconnect with my body, explore how I'm feeling and share and connect with other mums.” *Participant feedback*



“Both myself and my baby had a **fantastic time and really appreciate the opportunity.** It really helped my mental wellbeing and I wanted to thank you for supplying such a **valuable class.**”  
*Participant feedback*



“A lovely instructor, has a great gentle and patient manner. She's amazing with the babies too, interactive and **truly motivating to young mums!** Thank you for organising these classes.”  
*Participant feedback*

“It's probably the **best class** I run as an antenatal and postnatal coach. It's a place where mums can come and be themselves. They don't have to put on a brave face or pretend. It's **wonderful to watch them bond** over the lack of sleep and pick each other up when one is having a rough week. It is so very very hard to become a parent and **Sport in Mind gives these mums a place to be,** creating routines which helps with mental health as well releasing endorphins through exercise which helps feeling good, even if for a little bit.”  
*Instructor feedback*



# Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week Event at The Oracle, Reading



In April 2024, Sport in Mind and GBA hosted an event in partnership with the founders of Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week, The Perinatal Mental Health Partnership (PMHP).

**25**

new mums and babies  
came together for a gentle  
movement to music class

The session provided an opportunity for new mums to relax, talk and move together for their mental wellbeing. This was to raise awareness of Maternal Mental Health and our ongoing commitment to supporting pregnant and new mums with their mental health at such a crucial life stage.

## **Kayleigh Harris, Head of National Partnerships for Sport in Mind said:**

"Thanks to all of the amazing mums that could join today or showed an interest in attending our event, this was all for you."

Congratulations Evie Canavan (Founder of the PMHP) and Ayesha Hussain on such a celebration of women and mental health, your strength and conviction in running Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week and World Maternal Mental Health Day is so inspiring."







**Sport in Mind Co-founder and Head of Growth and Innovation Kayleigh Harris on the GBA partnership and delivery work:**

“Sport in Mind’s mum and baby offer is more vital than ever, with statistics stating that maternal death rate in the UK has increased significantly over the past few years and is the highest it has been in almost 20 years.

Sport in Mind, will continue to provide a supportive, non-judgmental, safe space for women to get active and look after their physical, mental and social wellbeing. Thank you GBA on this partnership. Working together has allowed many more women in need to access our services.”

# This Mum Moves Ambassador Training

**This Mum Moves (TMM) Ambassador Training** is a half-day training event that will equip professionals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to discuss physical activity during pregnancy and after childbirth.

**In December 2023, GBA were successful in securing £16,000** from the South East Workforce Development Fund to provide 4 TMM Ambassador Training opportunities across Berkshire workforces.

Information on impact is in the infographic on the following pages.

168 individuals have been trained as This Mum Moves Ambassadors through 7 commissioned training workshops



## Resource support



Following feedback from a range of maternity workforces, a need was identified for information leaflets and posters which women could access to highlight the benefits of movement during pregnancy and beyond.

Over 2700 were distributed across Berkshire to a wide range of workforces and organisations





# VALUE OF THIS MUM MOVES AMBASSADOR TRAINING IN BERKSHIRE



Supporting women to continue enjoying and benefitting from an active lifestyle during their childbearing years by providing healthcare professionals with the tools to promote physical activity (PA) within routine care.

## BREAKDOWN OF STAFF TRAINED



“I am now able to be much more confident in discussing physical activity during and after pregnancy and have lots of tools that I can now use and signpost my ladies to. I am looking forward to being able to access the leaflets and arrange a display in my clinical area and encouraging women to 'get active'.” - anonymous

Since Nov 2022, 168 participants have been trained.



OF PARTICIPANTS WERE AWARE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICERS GUIDELINES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN PREGNANCY AND FOLLOWING CHILDBIRTH POST-TRAINING

THERE WERE SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN THOSE HAVING 'GOOD' AND 'ADVANCED' KNOWLEDGE IN PROMOTING PA TO PREGNANT WOMEN AND NEW MUMS



THERE WERE SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN THOSE FEELING 'CONFIDENT' OR 'HIGHLY CONFIDENT' IN PROVIDING ADVICE ON PA OR BEING ACTIVE TO PREGNANT WOMEN OR NEW MUMS

THERE WERE SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN THOSE FEELING 'CONFIDENT' OR 'HIGHLY CONFIDENT' IN STARTING A CONVERSATION AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT PA WITH PREGNANT WOMEN OR NEW MUMS



"I will now discuss the importance of physical activity at our 6/8 weeks checks more confidently and when we see them in our clinics" (midwife)

## AMBASSADOR'S FEEDBACK

# 3+ MONTHS AFTER TRAINING

“

“THE TRAINING HAS ENABLED ME TO SIGNPOST PERINATAL WOMEN TO SPORT IN MIND CLASSES LOCALLY, AND HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE TO DISCUSS PHYSICAL MOVEMENT DURING PREGNANCY, AS WELL AS USING THE KNOWLEDGE TO ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL MOVEMENT TO BE A FOCUS IN DISCUSSIONS IN MY WIDER TEAM.”

”

“I TAKE A GOODBOOST AQUA NATAL SESSION ONCE A WEEK - AND I AM NOW MORE CONFIDENT TO SPEAK TO MUMS TO BE & NEW MUMS IN GETTING MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE - THE KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION GAINED FROM THIS MUM MOVES TRAINING IS JUST AMAZING”



“

## CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS OUR AIMS

This Mum Moves contributes to Get Berkshire Active's strategic aims of supporting system change and upskilling Berkshire workforces.

**Increasing Physical Activity levels in Berkshire - part of a long term strategy**

**How?**

Key Aim : Engaging with health systems

GBA lead on a multi-agency Physical Activity in Maternity network including Maternity and Neonatal Services

Key Aim: Programme of workforce training to support healthcare professionals

This Mum Moves Ambassador accredited training programme

Key Aim: Focus on helping women to take greater interest in their own health

GBA commission local classes across Berkshire. Healthcare conversations focus on empowerment for new mums



Quotes from previous

# TMM Ambassadors across courses

“FOLLOWING THIS TRAINING IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WILL NOW DO DIFFERENTLY IN YOUR APPROACH TO PREGNANT WOMEN OR NEW MOTHERS?”

2024

Oct

“My practice will now involve more empathetic communication, tailored fitness plans and increased emotional support.”

“I definitely feel more confident about the subject and having conversations about this subject. I see new mums every week and we do talk about worries and societal pressures a lot. Thank you. I really enjoyed the course”

2024

Jul

“I will confidently discuss options with mothers. Consider my language and tailoring individual plans to meet the needs of women and where they are starting from.”

“I feel I have more confidence in sharing resources and the message that 150-minutes of moderate physical activity is encouraged, backed by evidence-based research.”

2024

Mar

“I am now able to be much more confident in discussing physical activity during and after pregnancy and have lots of tools that I can now use and signpost my ladies to. I am looking forward to being able to access the leaflets and arrange a display in my clinical area and encouraging women to 'get active'.”

2023

Nov

“This will be really useful to help me advocate TMM and use evidence-based information to influence health professionals as well as an opportunity to use the resources in any front facing communication we may carry out.”

“I was surprised about the evidence around the impact of physical activity on future generations - makes it even more important to support women to be active.”

2023

Jul

"I plan to implement this training across the entire midwifery workforce to ensure they feel confident to at least signpost and answer questions, if not have in depth conversations about exercise. I also plan to incorporate resources from here in antenatal education for women."

"That were was very little info on this subject beforehand - I feel empowered but also privileged to be part of the team who can help other mums."

2023

Mar

"I will feel comfortable about approaching women who are pregnant, planning or post pregnancy about encouraging exercise, and knowing that I have an immense online resource to help me with this, which I wouldn't have done pre course. Thank you!"

"I feel more confident in the knowledge I have and thanks to Cathy more knowledgeable about what is available locally to sign post too."

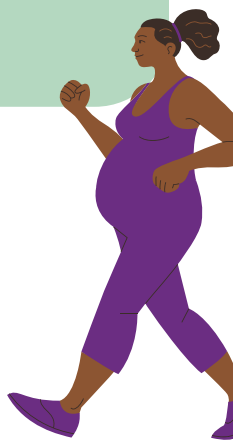
2022

Nov

"I will be able to discuss being more active with all women in pregnancy and postpartum, ask them about their level of activity first, not using the word exercise with less active people"

"I will now actively promote physical activity to the women in my care. I also feel that once I have completed the extra online toolbox, I would feel confident informing colleagues about the advice that they can give as well. I also feel that we would be able to create a physical activity notice board on occasions for women to look at and then discuss during appointments."

"I will be taking the information to the Maternity Voices Partnership that I'm a member of and see what is in place for different stakeholders to promote messages about physical activity - the key message for me is that you can make every contact count and that the language you use is very important"





## Physical Activity in Maternity Network

A Berkshire Physical Activity in Maternity network was established in July 2023 meeting quarterly providing an opportunity to bring a range of workforces together, including trained This Mum Moves Ambassadors, midwives, health visitors, public health, female physios, social prescribers, charities etc, to share learning, ideas and opportunities to support pregnant and postnatal women adopt more active lifestyles and improve mental wellbeing.

## Pregnancy and Postnatal Hub

GBA have developed a Pregnancy and Postnatal resource hub on our website to provide stakeholders and local women a range of useful resources from latest guidance, advice, training opportunities, safe ways to be active online during pregnancy and after childbirth, as well as information on the local programmes in the community. The resource hub also links to various reputable sites such as The Active Pregnancy and Foundation, NHS and The Institute of Health Visiting.

[Visit the hub here](#)





## Physical Activity in Maternity and the Early Years Newsletters

Quarterly newsletters covering physical activity in maternity and more recently the addition of the early years is sent out to over 250 partners working in this space. It is well received and showcases local impact to celebrate the effect this work has on women's lives as well as providing useful information on latest guidance, links to new resources etc.

[Read the newsletters here](#)

## Connecting nationally



As well as growing the work in this space at a local level in Berkshire, GBA are also supporting on national work:

Helping to run the **Active Partnerships National maternity Network**. GBA often present and share good practice across this national network.

We were also invited by the Active Pregnancy Foundation and the Institute of Health Visiting to speak at the **National This Mum Moves Networking event** during Mental Health Awareness week 2024.



# Internal learnings



Every locality, partner and community is different - no one size fits all

It's important to be as flexible and adaptable as possible

It takes times to be successful; small and gradual steps are needed for organic growth



PA is often not seen as a priority area within the Maternity Services but it can play a huge role in supporting priorities such as gestational diabetes and perinatal mental health problems

More focus is needed on co-production with local women



Embedding long term change across the maternity system is essential but challenging

Capturing long term impact of how This Mum Moves Ambassadors are using their new skills and knowledge longer term is useful but challenging



Limited capacity and funding makes creating long term sustainability hard