Mums' Zone was set up as a holistic health and wellbeing intervention targeting inactive mums at risk of poor mental health in Slough and Wokingham. The weekly programme provided physical activity in the form of yoga and support through informal workshops to encourage behavioural change. Steering groups have been established in both areas made up of 15 local experts in the areas of peri-natal health and wellbeing and the intervention was shaped by local mums. Intervention aims:

- Improve mental health and physical wellbeing
- Provide messaging and signposting
- Offer an opportunity for mums to get together in a comfortable setting
- Aid social networking and peer support

Canterbury Christ Church University provide the research and evaluation for Mums' Zone and are advising, supporting and analysing the intervention, which also includes the analysis of a control group.

20% of new and expectant mums are affected by perinatal mental illness
1 in 10 women are affected by post natal depression
Most women are able to make a full recovery with the right support

The mental health charity Mind suggests that new mums:

- 'Build a support network'
  Talk to other new parents, share feelings and experiences, go to groups and get peer support

- 'Look after yourself'
  Keep active to boost your mood and do things for yourself. Take time to relax and unwind

**Benefits of physical activity**
Physical health reduces risk of serious illness
Mental health improves well being, reduces anxiety and depression
Individual improves self esteem and confidence
Community brings people together, builds social links
Outcomes

Participants:
22 in Slough
31 in Wokingham

Total visits:
112 in Slough
121 in Wokingham

Improvements have been made in:
❤ mental and physical wellbeing
❤ increasing social connections
❤ greater knowledge about local support

Participant feedback

“The programme is great – the yoga sessions are brilliant. Arooj is fantastic at teaching yoga and taking time to explain/demonstrate/help the yoga poses. The session is great for mental and physical wellbeing – there isn’t any other affordable sessions which offer so much. Thank you it’s a great programme.”

“I have really enjoyed and looked forward to coming each week. Leaders are lovely and help with babies during yoga if needed, I have some new friends and feel like I can chat about anything in a non-judgmental atmosphere.”

“I have really enjoyed attending sessions every Monday. It is a great start to the week with a small group of regular people. The relaxed sessions offer new information and opportunities to find out/discuss areas of concern or things I hadn’t thought of.”

“It has really increased my confidence getting out the house and meeting new friends. I have learnt and applied so many things. My physical fitness has improved from doing yoga, I feel more relaxed and calm as well as have more energy when I go home. This is an excellent programme and has shaped me into a better person. The staff are fab.”

“Mums’ Zone is great. It always motivates me to come knowing how I will feel afterwards. It has definitely improved my wellbeing, I feel more toned and happy since I have started yoga. I like that I have the opportunity to talk with other mums and share my concerns. This way I have made new friends (I am new to the area) and I always look forward to meeting them. I think Arooj is a great teacher.”

“It’s given me some much needed time to stretch, relax and breathe and really sets me up for the week. If I am calmer my baby is calmer.”
We recruited ambassadors for Mums’ Zone to offer support and health and well being advice. They have provided practical support with the babies and had the chance to receive training in Behaviour Change. Some undertook the Slough volunteer passport scheme which offers training modules on volunteering. One of the ambassadors has now found employment and others have gone onto further training.

**Ambassador feedback**

“We, Mums’ Zone has provided me with a great opportunity to learn new skills as well as support local mums with their wellbeing. The training provided by GBA was great and I have accessed further training which has now enabled me to enter into education.”

“As a volunteer, it has been very rewarding to see new mums come together and start to form friendships. Being a mum can be an isolating experience and it’s my job to make everyone feel welcome. All credit to the group, they do my job for me! Everyone chats, and, unlike a lot of baby & toddler activities, there are no existing friendship groups or cliques to make new joiners feel excluded. It’s a very non-judgmental and non-competitive atmosphere. The workshops are very interesting. It’s so nice to see the babies settle in and become familiar with the setting over a few weeks. In short, I’m so pleased that this opportunity came up just at the right time for me, as I start to wind down on paid employment. I feel it is a very well-managed, worthwhile initiative.”

“It is great to support mums on this challenging journey and to see the positive changes it has made. The mums love coming back and it has inspired many to go on to try other activities and give them confidence and friendships.”
Thoughts from Mums’ Zone leads:

Cathy Carr, Slough: “Mums’ Zone was inspired by my own personal struggles as a new mum and realising there was very little out there to support mums health and wellbeing. I wanted to offer something that focused on mums and provided a relaxed environment for gentle physical activity as well as time for social connections, healthy snacks and well being support through local providers and experts. The Mums’ Zone intervention works at both a local and strategic level to put in place the systems to support these mums providing an opportunity for longer term awareness for physical and mental health. We hope to expand the intervention and be able to offer it in more communities so many more mums can experience the positive benefits.”

Alison Morrow, Wokingham: “Mums’ Zone has been one of the most inspirational interventions I have worked. It has taken a whole system approach to develop an intervention with service users at the forefront. A true partnership between a leisure provider, active partnership, local authorities, academic institutions and local perinatal health and wellbeing experts. Mums’ Zone has made a tangible difference to the mums and babies it supports.”