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Overview of Project and Evaluation

Healthwatch Luton are working with local communities to review the preconception support for women in Luton. The Integrated Care System Healthwatch across, Bedfordshire, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes. Healthwatch worked together, taking the preconception message into local communities. Healthwatch Luton (HWL) focused on how women are disproportionately affected during pregnancy, in relation to the health of women and their babies, born in Luton and are working together to review the preconception support and improve the outcomes. Key areas identified for the women of Luton include, the challenges of diversity, many different ethnic groups and poverty, and some of the complexities of pregnancy include presenting late in pregnancy with complexities. There is also an above average of mortality rates for mothers and their babies.

Working with health professionals from maternity services, Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) Tommy's and Diabetes UK. Healthwatch Luton raised awareness of challenges of pregnancies for women and families in Luton, through two health promotion events. Health promotion resources include, BLMK Healthy Mother, Healthy Pregnancy Events, Training and Education package (BHT), MVP, service user engagement, taking the preconception message into the community, training and education package (MKUH), resources training for professionals and leaflets in different languages, preconception clinic, counselling clinic, focusing on hypertension diabetes, obesity & Tommy's charity providing preconception tool, and Diabetes UK providing patient information packs and Healthwatch Luton. HWL attended Luton's Picnic in the Park event, discussions with families, including women on preconception and pregnancy was followed by completing a questionnaire. All the information gathered came from a wide range of ethnic groups, including those people, whose views are underrepresented.

Using the Theory of Change model to ensure we are project focused on producing the right outcome meeting the aim of this project: With particular focus on underrepresented audiences in Luton. We considered the translations requirements for the focus groups. HWL engaged with the communities of Luton, in Hockwell Ring and Bury Park, including women who plan to become pregnant. The two educational events supported by a wide range of health professionals,

As the project developed it was expanded to cover, period poverty general women's health and the menopause. HWL held two focus groups with female students in at Luton Sixth Form College, and one group with young women, including staff within the college. and finally, discussion with women and a questionnaire at Luton's Picnic in the Park, all of which gathered information from a wide range of ethnic groups, including those people, whose views are underrepresented.

Women attending the pregnancy Healthy women, Healthy Pregnancy events gave positive feedback, stating they enjoyed the events, they were informative and informal the ladies felt comfortable discussing topics in relation to preconception and pregnancy.

Results of questionnaire identified many people did not use contraception. 97% of people would get support, and wanted support about exercise, diet, supplements and mental health. Most people would go to the General Practitioner

(GP) for this support. 55% of respondents would go to their GP in the first 10 weeks.

HWL prepared the project approval, ensuring we are ready to begin our publicity, promotion and relationship management. share information presented by professionals. Co -design groups were identified to include those that we have not engaged with previously with services and that are identified as communities which are underrepresented as users.

Healthwatch Luton (H WL) planned two online sessions however nobody signed up for these sessions, and they were cancelled. HWL then held two face to face groups at community centres across Luton, inviting a range of organisations and professionals to share information, these sessions worked well with pregnancy information and health promotion information being presented by professionals to the women in Luton, these events were held at Hockwell Ring Community Hub and Bury Park Community Centre, during these events there was the opportunity to capture the views of the population of Luton. Two focus groups were held at a college in Luton, where Tommy's resources were used and discussions on women's general health and preconception advice. Questionnaires were used to gather feedback. A further group was held with staff at the college, involving women, to gather their feedback on preconception.

Community events



There are some things you can do before pregnancy that will make a difference to the future health of your child

Join Healthwatch Luton & Luton & Dunstable Maternity Voices for an information event to find out about the care, support and advice available for you in preparing for pregnancy.



Methodology of engagement and feedback

This report was commissioned by the BLMK Intergrated Care Board. Healthwatch Luton has previously completed work on women's health and menopause, this project will gather information on preconception, pregnancy, women's health and menopause.

Healthwatch Luton held first two focus groups held at Bury Park on 30th January, and Hockwell Ring on 17th April, involved working with health professionals from maternity services from Bedfordshire Hospitals, Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) Tommy's and Diabetes UK. They followed the same structure, included sharing the same information about healthy women pre-conception and during pregnancy, with the opportunity for discussions. The health promotion materials include, BLMK Healthy Mother, Healthy Pregnancy Events, training and Education package (BHT), MVP, service user engagement, taking the preconception

message into the community, training and education package (MKUH), e resources training for professionals and leaflets in different languages, preconception clinic, counselling clinic, focusing on hypertension diabetes, obesity & Tommy's charity providing preconception tool, and Diabetes UK providing patient information packs and Healthwatch Luton. Feedback was taken through discussions and questionnaires

Healthwatch Luton (HWL) planned two online sessions however nobody signed up for these sessions, and they were cancelled. Healthwatch Luton also planned an online survey.

Focus groups were held with students at Luton Sixth Form College used the Tommy's Toolkit, planning for a pregnancy, a healthy pregnancy and care after the birth, period poverty and women's health. Feedback was taken through discussions and questionnaires. Luton Sixth Form College staff also completed a Women's Health survey, fourteen members of staff at Luton Sixth Form College completed a survey on women's health in relation to preconception and pregnancy. Participants included those from underrepresented groups, who had not given feedback before.

HWL attended a local event held in Luton, Picnic in the Park and spoke to forty-two women about preconception and pregnancy and supported them to complete a questionnaire on preconception and pregnancy, reaching out to gain the views of underrepresented groups of Luton.

HWL attended a local event held in Luton, Denbeigh Health Fest and had discussions with women about menopause, the signs and symptoms and effects and supporting the women to complete a questionnaire.

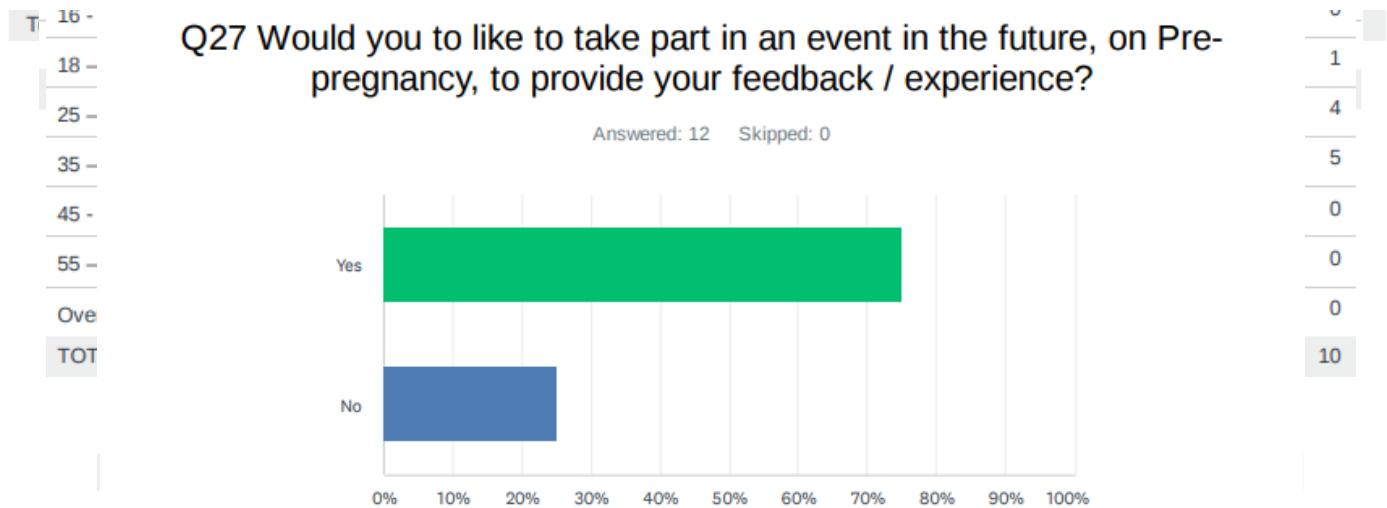
Overall Summary of Findings- Thematic Statements in Common

The aim to improve the outcome for pregnancies in Luton is to provide education and knowledge and the best service and the best outcome for women, their babies and families it is important to provide a smoother patient journey, with a greater, we needed to understand the views of service user and the local population.

TOTAL 8

TOTAL 12

Total Respondents: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	75.00%	9
No	25.00%	3
TOTAL		12

MVP is an organisation which works collaboratively across England, to review and develop maternity services, including services and health professionals, service users including, families who use maternity services and commissioners who fund these services. They aim is, 'to make pregnancy, birth and early parenthood services the best they can be for each family'.

Tommy's provide pregnancy information through their midwife-led resources, covering everything you need to know about having a safe and healthy pregnancy from conception to birth, including planning to have a pregnancy, becoming pregnant giving birth and what happens after birth. Personalized toolkit and calculators are available on NHS and Healthwatch Luton website, enabling mothers to track their symptoms and their baby's development. This is an interactive service which enables weekly emails from a midwife, with advice and support and a free phone helpline. The two community events presented the same information, Healthy Mother, Healthy Pregnancy Programme, with advice on preconception and pregnancy.

At each event the doctor shared the NHS Patient Decision Tools which, are the be used between the family and friends and General Practitioners (GPs)s at appointments. The MVP engaged a discussion with the attendees and one member of the public asked if these resources could be available, shared on each GPs practice websites so they can view these before appointments? Another member of the public asked could these tools be shared in schools, if they are not already in PSHE lessons. Speakers from antenatal care from The University of East Anglia spoke about diabetes and antenatal care. Speakers from Bedfordshire Hospitals discussed Preconception clinics. There were presentations from NHS Diabetes Programme spoke about diabetes during pregnancy, and another talk on diabetes and planning a pregnancy and working with the community pharmacy. The new resources Tommys planning for pregnancy was presented and shared with the attendees and the link is on HWL website, this package giving good advice on preconception and pregnancy care. Finally, the Menopause support symptom checker from the NHS website was shared with attendees.

General feedback during discussion from service users included comments about **GP practices, and difficulties getting an appointment**, which could affect preconception or ante-natal care included, one respondent stated they were **unable to book GP appointments in advance**, another service user stated, she is **still unable to book a GP appointment over the phone**, HWL to follow up process. **Patients need to be told how to navigate online triage forms on their GP practice website**. And finally, **should every practice have a Patient Participation Group (PPG)**, some individuals said their GP doesn't have a PPG.

Feedback Forms from the event included **the event was very interesting and informative**. Perhaps **we need a more detailed information, before the event, including the purpose of the event**, what to expect, who will be speaking and what about? One professional attending the event stated, **Positive. Lots of useful information to be able to pass on to patients or have an accessible signposting avenue. Having professionals speaking about conditions and services worked well.**' all feedback from the women was positive, including;

One service user stated sharing slides and discussions, can help to make conversations more informal and comfortable in an open environment where you are speaking with and not at people., 'Great information on pregnancy and **diabetes** however improvements included, spread out with breaks and better visual quality' There is a need for a **Diabetes Prevention Course for people who are 'borderline' or pre-diabetic**.

Following the first two events feedback from the planning of the event included the **strengths partnership working with MVP, Family Hubs and stakeholders in Luton**. Tommys Toolkit is now being used across BLMK offering continuity of care. Barriers to education and understanding of healthy pregnancy included, translations or cultural competence needs funding. Access to information directly to women, identified barriers in relation to language and ability. There needs to be a focus around general women's health. There needs to be generation engagement, with the inclusion of young people and general women's health through menopause.

Who did we involve:

- Service Users
- Healthwatch – Luton & MK
- Family Hubs – Luton
- Luton and Dunstable Hospital
- Community Centres
- ICB Healthcare Professionals
- Community Centre and Children's Centres
- MK & L&D University Hospitals
- Local VCFS's



Focus groups were held at Luton Sixth Form College used the Tommy's Toolkit, planning for a pregnancy, a healthy pregnancy and care after the birth.

General Women 'Health'

Two focus groups were held at Luton Sixth Form College on 22nd May, thirty students aged between sixteen and nineteen participated, during these group information on, healthy lifestyles for women, and preparing for a healthy pregnancy in the future, preconception advice, pregnancy advice was shared and Tommy's resources shared, this was followed by participating in discussions about women's health generally, preconception and pregnancy followed by two questionnaire, one on general women's health and the second on period poverty

The women's health questionnaire with college students in Luton, looked at the health of young women and included feedback from thirty students. Feedback identified some positive factors **When asked what advice or support they needed for their health, four students identified they smoked, but this was not cigarettes, it was vaping.**

Students identified they need support on being healthy prior to pregnancy. Eight students identified they needed **support or advice on exercise**, and eleven on diet, with two also advise or **support on their BMI**, eleven of the students took **supplements** needed and one student needed advice or support on **diabetes**. Eight students identified they needed advice or support on their **mental health**, twelve students stated they need other advice or support, but did not say what area they needed support with.

When asked where they would prefer to get this advice and support from? Eighteen students stated they would prefer to get **advice from their General Practitioner (G.P.)**, five identified they would get advice from **Pharmacy**, fourteen students stated they would get advice from **social media**, while thirteen students stated they would get advice or support from their **family** and thirteen a **friend**, and two their **workplace**.

Dietary supplements included multi-vitamins, vitamin D, and folic acid, in discussions students talked about heavy periods and having a diagnosis of vitamin D deficiency. Students identified it would be good to have a **booklet** or

leaflet available in GP practice or pharmacist giving information on diet and supplements during pregnancy.

When asked, how often do you undertake any regular exercise and physical activity per week? Six students stated they did no exercise or physical activity, while fourteen students identified they did less than 2.5 hours of moderate exercise, eight stated they did more than 2.5 hours of moderate exercise. **Four students stated they were slightly under weight. Twenty-two students identified they were neither overweight nor underweight and two were slightly overweight.** When asked if they knew their Body Mass Index? (BMI), to work out if their weight is healthy, eleven said yes, four said no, while sixteen were unsure. Discussions with students included **the barriers to exercise included the cost of going to the gym, expense of travelling to the gym, gyms not being in local area and not feeling comfortable doing exercise.** some students did say lots of gyms do now offer women only sessions.

When asked if they have any medical or/ long term conditions? **Five students said yes, which included diabetes, and asthma.** Those with **diabetes one managed it with medication, two with diet, five with exercise,** all these students had spoken to someone about how the condition, and or treatment. During discussions students identified their concerns about getting diabetes, many of their relatives had been diagnosed with gestational diabetes during their pregnancy and many more currently have type 2 diabetes, students identified there should be more information on preventing diabetes during pregnancy and later in life. Information should be available in the GP practice and at the pharmacy. Barriers included, they said some family members are not able to read English and leaflets available are in English. Doctors must spend a lot of time giving out medication for diabetes, **they should have more talks in the practice about preventing diabetes, family planning and healthy pregnancy, meetings for pregnant mums at the surgery would give opportunities to talk.** If they are local people are more likely to attend.

When students asked if they currently live with a mental health condition, nine students stated yes. Two students managed their condition with medication, two with diet and nutrition, four managed with physical activity, and eight got support from friends and family, with two attending support groups.

All the students who participated in the questionnaire were female with two being over eighteen and the remaining being between sixteen and eighteen. All the students lived in Luton. The ethnic origins of the students included, eleven coming from a Bangladeshi origin and fourteen identified as Pakistani and three identified as Black British African and one being Black British Caribbean and one identifying as White British. No students consider themselves to have a disability.

The same groups of students completed questionnaire and discussion on period poverty. Period poverty refers to the lack of access to menstrual products. It affects 500 million people worldwide. Many women and adolescent girls cannot manage their period effectively and are embarrassed and feel shame. Which has an impact on their lives.

In the past 12 months have you struggled to afford to buy sanitary products? (sanitary pads or tampons) **ten students stated they had not been able to afford sanitary products.** Do you struggle to buy sanitary products every month? **Ten students replied yes they struggle to buy sanitary products.** Have you used old clothes/tissue/toilet roll due to not having sanitary products?

Three students answered yes. Do you find it difficult to maintain your hygiene due to lack of sanitary products? One student said yes. Have you missed school/college/ work due to not being able to afford sanitary products? **Five students said yes, they had missed school or college due to lack of sanitary products.** Have you used any of these services for sanitary products? Local council, food banks, no students had heard of these services however seventeen students used the college service. **No students had heard of other services available** including Pick up my period app, My period web site, Alliance for period Suppliers or charities/ government initiatives/ help with sanitary products? **Seventeen students used the college service, offering sanitary products. Students heard about the college, school through a teacher or friends.** No students would stop you using this service.

Discussion with students identified they had filled in a questionnaire at the beginning of their course, but **many were embarrassed and did not apply for the products**, they wished they had been approached again later in their course, circumstances also changed. Students identified they found it **embarrassing having to go and get the products**, which came in a brown paper bag and asked if there was a better way of getting them. many students stated they had got products from Health and Social Care teachers, other members of staff and other students and friends. Finally, students asked **why products were so expensive?**

Finally, students looked at resources available when planning a pregnancy, including Tommy's Toolkit.

Eighteen students identified they would not use contraception, on discussion, many students were looking forward to getting married and having children. **Seven students stated they would stop taking contraception 3 months before planning to have a baby and five students stated they would stop taking contraception 1 Year before trying for a baby.** Students discussed how they had never been informed about this and this information should be available at the GP practice or pharmacy.

Have you received any advice from healthcare professionals prior to planning pregnancy? No students have experienced a pregnancy however they said they would like **advice on eating a balanced diet, supplements and being the correct weight. They would want this advice and support from the GP, pharmacy or midwife**, they would also get support from social media, friends and family.

Dietary supplements included multi-vitamins, vitamin D, and folic acid, in discussions students talked about not knowing what supplements to take prior to pregnancy and during pregnancy and some students having a diagnosis of vitamin D deficiency. Students identified it would be good to have **a booklet or leaflet available in GP practice or pharmacist giving information on diet and supplements during pregnancy**. We discussed folic acid being taken before pregnancy and iron tablets during pregnancy.

Students thought it was important to be a **healthy weight prior to pregnancy and during pregnancy, they would want advice on a healthy diet, that met their cultural needs**. Students stated they had learnt about the food plate at school, however wanted this to be clearer how it could be incorporated in their diet, with most students in the groups coming from a Bangladeshi or Pakistani background.

When asked what stage of your pregnancy will you **book your first antenatal appointment** with your midwife? Students were unsure how to do this but thought they would do it in **the first stages of the pregnancy or in the first ten weeks, or soon as they thought they were pregnant.**

We discussed Tommy's resources and students identified the importance of meeting regularly with health professionals to monitor the mother's health and the baby's health and development. Students discussed this resource should be available at the GP but also it would be useful if shown in schools and colleges.

When asked Do you have any medical / long term conditions? Five students said yes, which included diabetes, and asthma. Those with **diabetes** one managed it with medication, two with diet, five with **exercise**, all these students had spoken to someone about how the condition, and or treatment

Luton Sixth Form College Women's Health survey, fourteen members of staff at Luton Sixth Form College completed a survey on women's health in relation to preconception. Twelve of the fourteen women were planning on having a baby in the near future, one was not sure, and one was not planning on having a baby. All the respondents identified a good age to have a baby was between twenty and thirty. Four of the women were between eighteen and twenty-four, seven were between twenty-five and thirty-four, and three were between thirty-five and forty-four. All the women came from an Asian ethnicity, with 2 identifying as Indian, three from Bangladesh and eight from Pakistani origins, one did not identify ethnicity.

When asked how long before conception they would stop taking contraception, one identified a month, four stated between six and twelve months, one a year, while 6 identified they will not use contraception.

When asked about advice and support, two women wanted **advice on smoking**, the other women were not smokers, a majority of the women, ten identified they would like **advice on exercise**, while eight on **diet** and four on **diabetes**. Four women identified they were **slightly overweight** and one **very overweight**, indicating the women were thinking about health lifestyle during pregnancy, and maybe being a healthy weight before and during pregnancy. While ten respondents stated they would take supplements, five would take **folic acid**, while one would take **vitamin supplements**, four did not identify what supplement they would take.

When asked about exercise, two respondents stated they did not exercise, nine did moderate exercise, and two did more intensive exercise, one did not state how much exercise they do.

Three respondents identified as having **underlining health conditions including diabetes, asthma and migraines**. Although none of the women identified as having mental health problems, four identified they **would like mental health support**.

When asked about advice and support eleven stated they would get advice from their **General Practitioner (GP)**, being the most popular answer while only one stated they would use the **pharmacy**. However, eight also said they would get advice from a **family member** and five from a **friend**, some respondents would **get advice and support from many sources**. Four respondents stated they would get information from **social media**.

When asked at what stage of your pregnancy will you book your first antenatal appointment with your midwife? Thirteen stated they would **book the appointment within the first ten weeks** while one stated **after ten weeks**.

HWL attended a local event held in Luton, Picnic in the Park and had discussions with forty-two women about preconception and pregnancy and asked them to complete a questionnaire. How long before conceiving / trying to conceive did you stop using contraception? **Twenty-three women had never used contraception, fourteen stated they would stop taking contraception 3 months before planning to have a baby, three stated 1 Year before trying for a baby and two would stop 1 month before.**

The women identified they had received any advice from healthcare professionals prior to planning pregnancy? On losing weight and a balanced diet. The preferred professional to receive advice from was the GP and midwife. Most women said the information you received helpful and informative. Women stated they would like more information on contraception, and some asked for information on preventing gestational diabetes. Many women stated they would like women's health groups in their local community, a place staffed by women, to give advice on women's health, contraception, preconception, pregnancy, care for women and baby after pregnancy and to monitor babies' growth and development, but there were no local groups available. This would also stop isolation and give women the opportunity to meet other young mothers. Also, information on where to register birth and child benefit etc.

Did you feel informed prior to getting pregnant about how to be healthy or where to get support? A common theme was the women who answered the questionnaire already had a child and so had previous knowledge of how to be healthy and where to get support, however nine women stated they needed advice on how to be healthy and where to get support. Most women stated they would get support from friends and family. Although all women said they would get support from their doctor or midwife, they would look online. Ten women identified it would be good to have online support groups and fourteen stated they would like women's health pr family planning clinics. Many women stated they would prefer to get this advice and support from the NHS, online, from GP or midwife.

Nine women took folic acid before the pregnancy, most women stated they would eat a balance diet, sugar and do not drink alcohol. Three women took Vitamin D and three women took Pregnancy Care medication, five women took multi-vitamins.

All women stated they would book their first antenatal appointment with the midwife during the first stage of the pregnancy after the first month. Most women did you see health professional every eight to twelve weeks with appointments getting more frequency as the pregnancy progressed.

Medical conditions the women had included type **2 diabetes, some controlled on diet, others medication, some women stated they had gestational diabetes during their pregnancy.** Many women identified they had experience **hypertension during their pregnancy,** with one stating they had **pre-eclampsia.** A few women stated they were anaemic and had taken iron tablets, folic and vitamin D. most women had natural birth with limited medical intervention. One woman had pre-eclampsia, a long labour and eventually had a C

Menopause is a natural process all women experience, it is important to understand the symptoms, and the affects to understand the needs of the population of the women in Luton. Healthwatch Luton has previously held listening events, a survey and case studies on the menopause which led to more information and support for women.

Healthwatch Luton spoke to women at Denbeigh Health Fest after discussions with women 28 women, HWL supported them to complete the questionnaire on menopause.

The most common symptom women were experiencing included, irregular periods, during discussions with the women, some stated they did not know how long this would go on for, one woman stated she had not had a period for nine months and thought that was her last and then had a period. Some women stated their periods were irregular, some very heavy and other light. Not knowing when your period is going to happen is worrying or having it suddenly can be embarrassing. **A common theme was the women would like more information on the menopause and what to expect and how to manage.**

The second most common symptom was hot flushes, many women found this are embarrassing, all of a sudden, they were feeling hot and some stated they needed to change their clothes, many women stated they **had stayed at home to avoid embarrassment and where they could keep themselves cool. Some women stated it affected their relationships with partner.**

Many women stated they had **gained weight during the menopause, and their body shape had changed, this had led to type 2 diabetes, which was common in their family, which left them feeling tired. A common theme was the women did not use treatments but made lifestyle changes**, including many women suggested wearing cotton clothes and a hand fan, or fan and open the windows, to get fresh air. Try to drink lots of fluids, water and herbal teas, nuts and try to lose weight. Stay at home when you think your period is due. **Many women said they would like more information on diet, was there foods that triggered hot sweats.** Many women stated they were trying to lose weight and eat healthily, because they thought it affected their confidence and self-esteem. **Advice for women on diet throughout the menopause would be helpful.**

Many women felt their confidence had been affected by the menopause, they found themselves doubting themselves, they did not feel good about themselves, many felt this affected their motivation, they felt tired and fed up. Some women stated they felt anxious and emotional while others experienced panic attacks.

Many women stated they had night sweats and had experience unsettled nights and poor sleep, which had left them feeling fatigue, tired and emotional, some stated this affected their mood. A few women had experience headaches and lack of concentration due to lack of sleep. **A common theme was the women would like advice on reducing night sweats and improving sleep.**

Most women did not go to their GP but got support, but got advice and support from female, family members. Only two women had taken hormone replacement therapy, HRT, on discussion, many women thought taking HRT increased your risks of cancer.

Many women stated they would like more information on what is available, besides HRT.

A common theme across the feedback from women, was they got support from their female family, some had gone to the doctor, those that went to the doctor were advised to take HRT but had chosen not to take it. It would be helpful if there were local community groups for women. All the women spoken to did not know of any support groups. Many stated, there needs to be more information about the menopause available at the doctors, so you do not have to ask for it, including leaflets. There was a common theme that leaflets are always in English and need to be available in different languages.

There is also a need for information online. Support groups in communities for women would be good with professionals sharing information on being healthy.

We have all other types of health advice, but nothing on the menopause and women do not want to discuss their symptoms it is embarrassing.

Overall summary of findings

- Patients still have problems getting appointments at their General Practitioners (GP) and need advice on how to navigate online triage forms on their GPs.
- Women identified there was great information on pregnancy and diabetes at the events
- Resources from events should be shared across communities and schools
- Having professionals speaking about conditions and services worked well.
- Professionals who participated in the focus groups identified there was a lot of useful information to be able to pass on to women or have an accessible signposting avenue.
- Diabetes Prevention Course for people who are 'borderline' or pre-diabetic.

- The resources used in event were excellent and should be shared in GP practices, schools and colleges.
- There are strengths partnership working with MVP, Family Hubs and stakeholders in Luton.
- Barriers to education and understanding of healthy pregnancy included, translations or cultural competence needs funding.
- Access to information directly to women, identified barriers in relation to language and ability.
- There needs to be more focus around general women's health in local communities
- There needs to be greater engagement, with the inclusion of young people and general women's health through menopause.
- Young women would like more support or advice on diet, exercise, supplements and calculating their BMI, many students took supplements, but need more advice on these. And suggested booklet or leaflet available in GP practice or pharmacist giving information on diet and supplements during pregnancy.
- Young women identified a healthy weight prior to pregnancy and during pregnancy was important, they would want advice on a healthy diet, that met their cultural needs. Students stated they had learnt about the food plate at school, however wanted this to be clearer, how it could be incorporated in their diet, with most students in the groups coming from a Bangladeshi or Pakistani background.
- Many students at the college found it difficult to buy sanitary products and for some students this had affected their attendance at school and college.
- Deprivation in Luton is high and affects the quality of life, many students used the college service, offering sanitary products.
- Underlining health conditions including diabetes, asthma and migraines. Although none of the women identified as having mental health problems, four identified they would like mental health support.
- Discussions with students included the barriers to exercise included the cost of going to the gym, expense of travelling to the gym, gyms not being in local area and not feeling comfortable doing exercise. Although students did say lots of gyms do now offer women only sessions.
- There was concern about diabetes, students identifying, should be more information on preventing diabetes during pregnancy and later in life. Information should be available in the GP practice and at the pharmacy. Barriers included, they said some family members are not able to read English and leaflets available are in English. Doctors must spend a lot of time giving out medication for diabetes,
- There should be more talks and information in the GP practices about preventing diabetes, family planning and having a healthy pregnancy.

- Students suggested meetings for pregnant mums at the surgery; to share information and this would give opportunities to talk. If events are local people are more likely to attend.
- It was identified the importance of meeting regularly with health professionals to monitor the mother's health and the baby's health and development.
- Students discussed this resource should be available at the GP but also it would be useful if shown in schools and colleges.
- A common theme was the women would like more information on the menopause and what to expect and how to manage.
- Weight gain during the menopause, and a change in body shape, had led to type 2 diabetes, which was common in their families, more information on maintaining a healthy weight and preventing diabetes.
- Advice on reducing night sweats and improving sleep.
- Other treatments besides HRT

Recommendations

The information presented at the preconception events was recognised by professionals and women attending the event as being excellent and informative, this information needs to be available in a wide range of settings, including GP surgeries, pharmacists, schools and colleges and online.

A strength was the professionals presenting the information at the events and they represented many organisations, working together to promote healthy pregnancies, more of this, in communities of Luton, could improve the health of women and their babies in Luton.

Diabetes, pre-diabetes, gestational diabetes and type 2 diabetes are a common theme and a concern throughout all the surveys, more information needs to be available on the risks of the different types of diabetes and how to prevent, including diet, exercise, and information on preventing diabetes. Making the information relevant to the different communities, of Luton is important.

Barriers include leaflets and resources being in English, there is a need for leaflets and resources to be produced in many languages, easy read, there is a need for translation and interpretation services

Luton is an area of high deprivation; costs of services and accessing services including, travel need to be considered when offering services. There needs to be a focus around general women's health in local communities. There needs to be generation engagement, with the inclusion of young people and general women's health through menopause.

There should have more talks and information in the GP practices about preventing diabetes, family planning and having a healthy pregnancy. This needs to include support groups including peer support.

There needs to be more information available on women's health generally, and information and opportunities in local communities. Including information on the menopause, what to expect, signs and symptoms. Feedback identified may women get advice from family and friends on how to manage the symptoms and a wide variety of methods to manage these. However, when they went to the GP they were offered HRT, the women had many concerns about HRT and would like different advice around treatments and this needs to be available in the GP, pharmacy and other local services.

Healthwatch Luton are currently working with a master's students at Bedfordshire University who is studying menopause in relation to different ethnicities in more detail and is looking at what services and treatments are offered by GP practices across Luton.

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