

Zine Project Report

In the Summer of 2021, during the Covid-19 Pandemic, with funding from **Healthwatch Sheffield** the Sheffield Maternity Cooperative ran a project with the aim of producing a zine which compiles the experiences of pregnancy, abortion and loss during the pandemic.

The zine had four main aims:

- 1. Giving a voice to the people and experiences which often are silenced or go unnoticed in mainstream health care.*
- 2. Support for others going through similar experiences to show they are not alone and giving them the courage to share their own story with someone close.*
- 3. Highlighting available services and support that people may not know about but that could offer additional care and support during pregnancy and birth.*
- 4. Highlighting issues and gaps in care to those working in birth, such as midwives, doulas and social workers.*

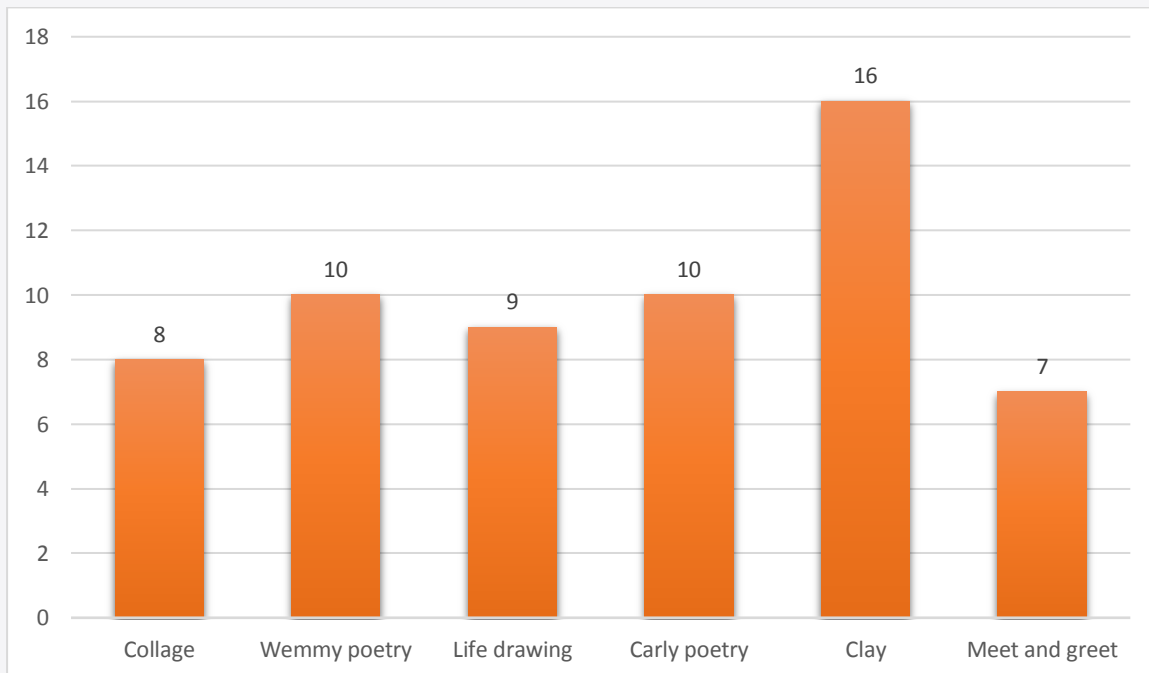


What took place

The SMC ran several workshops that allowed people to discuss and express their experiences, these included:

- Meet and greet session
- Collage workshop with Birungi Kawooja
- Poetry Workshop with Wemmy Ogunyankin
- Life Drawing workshop with Liah Edwardes
- Poetry drive with Carly Mountain
- Clay workshop with Kate Cooke

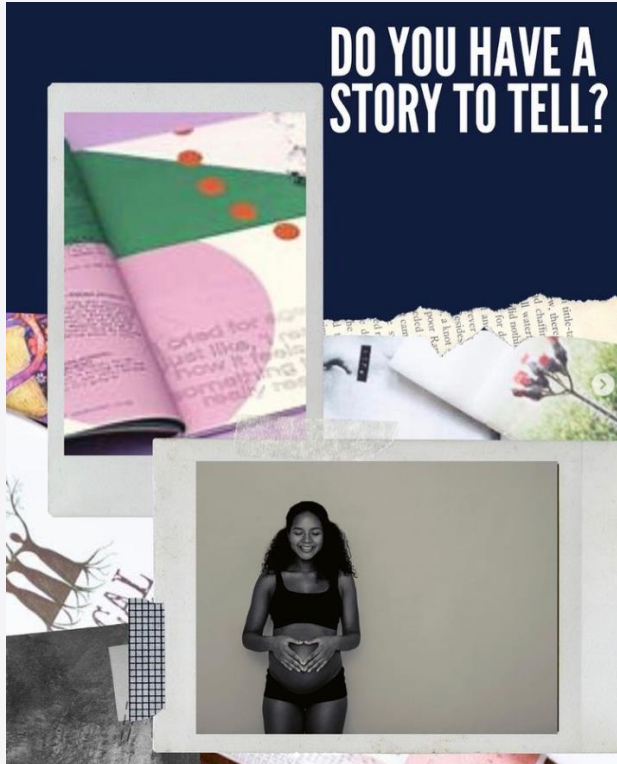
Attendees



How the community was engaged

Several project participants became involved through word of mouth and through conversations during our existing group sessions. We also ran a cross-platform social media campaign to reach a wider audience and several participants found out about the project this way.





sheffieldmaternitycooperative

sheffieldmaternitycooperative We've got exciting news about a mini-project we're launching this month which we'd love you to be involved in - The Sheffield Maternity Coop Zine!

- What is a zine?

A zine (pronounced 'zeen') is a mini magazine, usually hand produced, self-published with a small print run.

- What's the SMC Zine about?

The SMC is collecting your antenatal stories from the last year through the pandemic. Whether your experience is birth, pregnancy, a fertility journey, abortion, loss or early parenthood we want to hear from you. These stories will be put together in a beautiful online and printed zine and will tell local healthcare providers how their services could be improved.

- Why are we doing this?

We know the last year has been incredibly tough for people on an antenatal journey. We've heard from some of you how difficult it has been going through huge change in your life at a time when the world felt so uncertain. And we want to know how you feel about it now, what lessons could be learnt, and what you think could have been done differently. Your experience may also have been joyful and surprising - and everything and anything in between!

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sheffieldmaternitycooperative We are so excited to be offering this free workshop with collage artist @birungiart 🎨

THIS SUNDAY 🕒 5-6:30pm (online via zoom)

This is a fun, relaxing & welcoming workshop for people of all artistic abilities 😊 We invite you to explore your experiences, thoughts and feelings relating to your perinatal experiences.

We welcome you whatever you experience. Whether you have undergone fertility treatment, gave birth during the pandemic, had an abortion, are trying to conceive, or are parenting a small child. All experiences and all backgrounds welcome to this beautifully created and fun space.

(This workshop is part of a series of creative workshops and part of the the Sheffield Maternity Cooperative Zine project - you can find out more on our website www.sheffieldmaternitycooperative.co.uk/smc-zine)

DDM us with questions
 The link to book is in our bio

32w

👤 birungiart Looking forward to collaging with you ❤️❤️❤️

32w Reply

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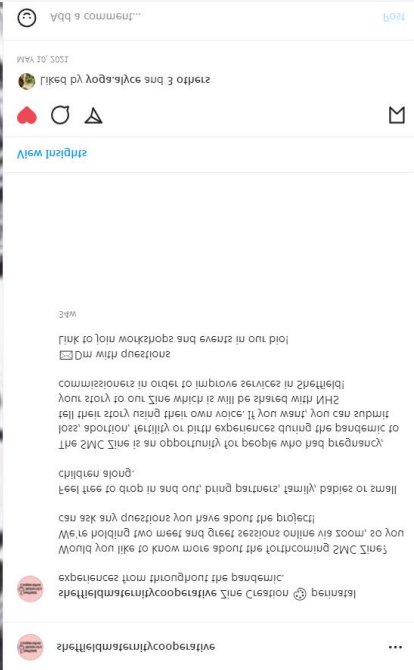
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MAY 26, 2021

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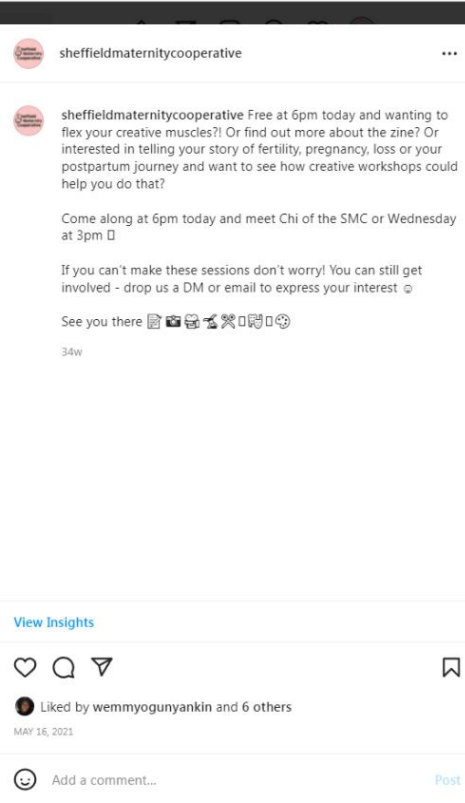


Interested in joining some of our **CREATIVE WORKSHOPS** or finding a way to tell your story?

Come to one of our meet and greets this week and talk about how you'd like to be involved in the zine, what creative workshops you'd like to see or just say hello!

Today - 16th May
Sunday at 6pm

19th May
Wednesday at 3pm!



Our suggestions for the improvement of health services based on the project's findings

- Clear and unambiguous pandemic restriction guidance. We've heard almost universally that the information surrounding Covid restrictions was unclear, especially toward the beginning of the pandemic. Participants disclosed that staff sometimes enforced or emphasised incorrect guidance at the sacrifice of empathy, relevant health information and bedside manner.
- An increase in postnatal support and contact with very clear and detailed guidance. Some participants have shared that they thought problems, complications and the stress resulting from them could have been avoided they were properly checked upon or if the concerns they had raised were addressed and not dismissed. There is a need for an increase in postnatal support such as breastfeeding support, physical recovery from birth, answers to questions around the health of a baby and the mental wellbeing of new parents.
- Ensure that signs of premature labour are checked for and that those that are pregnant are aware of the symptoms and know what to look for.
- Additional support and care given to first time pregnant people to reduce uncertainty in the event of already uncertain times. People reported not feeling as though they had enough support being pregnant for the first time.



- **Ensure that no one is left alone whilst in labour.** Although it's understood that staff availability may be sparse during periods of high stress on the NHS, we heard that in some cases people in labour had to physically walk around hospital in order to get attention of staff.
- **During training of medical staff, including imaging staff, ensure that employees have adequate sensitivity training.** So that they understand the significance of stages such as ultrasound scans and the hardship of not being allowed to have partners present during these moments
- **Dedicate resources and research to looking into the lasting psychological impacts of Covid** on those who gave birth during this period and on those who underwent medical interventions during pregnancy, C sections etc. Will this warrant additional postnatal support?
- **Ensure that people in labour are given adequate pain relief** that they are not left in pain for long periods of time and they their requests are taken seriously. We've heard accounts and seen in recent literature that a person's ethnicity can play a role in how likely they are to receive adequate pain relief, due to false cultural stereotypes such as Black women having higher pain tolerances and South Asian women being more likely to exaggerate pain.
- **More contact with culturally relevant communities and support groups** that can additionally assist in ways that the NHS cannot during and after pregnancy. Pregnancy and birth



are not just medically assisted processes but a culturally significant period. Better support can be afforded to pregnant people and their families if the health service works with groups from within these communities.

- **Better continuity of care.** Several participants reported that they believed they would have had a more positive birth experience if there was consistency in who was assigned to them throughout. People felt more able to disclose information to a familiar and competent care giver with whom trust had been built. This is especially important for pregnant people for whom there is a language or cultural barrier that may prevent them from receiving proper care.

Acknowledgements

We at the SMC would like to thank Healthwatch Sheffield for making this project possible. Not only have we been able to hear direct accounts of experiences surrounding pregnancy from people who would not normally be given a voice, we have made connections with the community which hopefully will allow us to contribute better care to individuals in the future.



www.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk

