

Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care North West Coast

Baby Box Information Brief

CLAHRC NWC is supporting the design and development of the evaluation for this initiative.

Lead: Ann Nolan, Commissioning Manager NHS Halton CCG

The Baby Box initiative, is part of the Cheshire and Merseyside Women's and Children's Service Partnership Vanguard Pioneer Programme. This partnership is formed of 27 organisations working collaboratively to improve maternity, neonatal women's and children's services. Population figures estimates that nearly 360,000 women of childbearing age live within the areas covered by the Programme. Key anticipated outcomes of the Programme include;

- **Reducing health inequalities.** This includes women, their babies, children and young people have access to services of the same high quality across Cheshire and Merseyside, and a reduction in variation in outcomes and experiences.
- **Delivering personalised health and care.** Increased informed choice for antenatal, birth and postnatal care, resulting in excellent experiences for women, babies and their families. Promotion of integrated, localised service delivery and support, including use of assistive technology, to enable individuals having greater involvement and control in their own healthcare.
- **Public Health.** Improvements in outcomes, quality and safety will have a most favourable impact on population health. In addition, specific local public health programmes that focus on issues such as perinatal mental illness, maternal vaccinations, smoking rates and maternal obesity will also contribute to improved public health.

Baby Boxes originated in Finland in 1938, in response to the country's very high infant mortality. The Box contained carefully selected items to take care of a baby during its first year of life. It is interesting to note, that there was a dramatic decline in infant mortality rates in the years following the introduction of the Box, it is not possible to say with any degree of scientific certainty that this was as a direct consequence of the Box. However, the Finnish government continues to provide the Box, and this phenomenon has now spread across the world, with the contents and associated interventions adapted to be able to respond to different communities.

As part of the Vanguard Pioneer Programme, the Baby Box initiative will be introduced with the intent of contributing to the outcomes of the Programme, in particular those identified above. It is intended that the Box which will be available to all women thus actively supporting the model of 'progressive universalism'. The Box will become part of an antenatal or postnatal pathway and support emerging new models of care. The Box will act as an engagement tool for organisations to actively work with mothers on a number of topic areas including maternal and child health and wellbeing, parenting style and child development. The Baby Box University platform will also support this approach.

As each area within the Programme has quite different needs, we will be working with local women and others on the development of the Box, as part of empowering individuals and communities to influence and shape new services.

The evidence base for Baby Boxes is currently small but growing exponentially. We have already been in discussions with Professor Karen Benzie who leads on the 'Welcome to Parenthood' Programme in Alberta, Canada, who was very keen to share any learning. In addition, Dr Karen Joash Consultant Obstetrician Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust whose organisation introduced Baby Boxes in June 2016 also has expressed a strong desire to work with us on evaluation.

30,000 Baby Boxes will be introduced across the Programme; this provides an opportunity for a collaborative evaluation project, working across institutional and organisational boundaries in order to create new ways of providing health services.

Ann Nolan

Ann.nolan@halton.gov.uk