

# St George's Maternity Assessment and Advice service 'Maternity helpline' project

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## AIM

To develop and implement a new dedicated telephone helpline service within the Maternity service at St Georges. Hospital

## BACKGROUND

During the Covid lockdowns where we had to limit patient attendance at the hospital, the Maternity team used telephone & virtual appointments to successfully maintain contact with patients. The use of telephone contact enabled patients to continue to receive timely advice & guidance and supported collaboration between hospital and community-based staff.

The trust successfully bid and received funding from the Health Foundation / Q Community enabling the design and set-up of a new dedicated maternity helpline service for patients and external partners.



## CONCLUSIONS

The introduction of the Maternity helpline service supports patient safety through offering timely advice, guidance and assurance for patients and partner organisations, It supports continuity of care with all conversations recorded and available in the patient's hospital record and has clear admission avoidance benefits – access to the helpline has helped identify cases where urgent admissions are a priority and reduced unnecessary visits. The newly structured service results in fewer calls to other clinic areas including the priority line in the delivery suite with staff reporting a more peaceful environment with less disruption.

*"On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April a lady came into the EPU for a scan and wanted to express how happy she was with the maternity helpline which she had used at the weekend. The midwife was a great help to her concerns and helped put her mind at ease"*

## METHODS

The project followed a well defined Plan-Do-Study- Act cycle with multiple study points and a wider review set for 3 months after go-live. Prior to the review multiple PDSA cycles focused on building & refining the internal processes necessary to run the helpline service and successfully capture information.

### Patient engagement & co-design

Early in the project definition phase we engaged with our Maternity Voices Partnership members to discuss thoughts about the line & how it could function best for them. They supported us naming the service as the 'Maternity Helpline' to be more easily recognisable and how some of our call answering & message functionality would work.

### Communication

Patient awareness of the helpline number and availability is crucial to the success of the service. Internal processes have been updated with women who come through the maternity services receiving notes and information clearly showing the helpline number as a first contact for most needs. An extensive poster and banner exercise in multiple languages both onsite and at external locations successfully supported patient awareness and access to the line.

## RESULTS

Positive feedback so far with midwives able to advise and support women in a dedicated helpline room, with the number of calls received steadily rising from go-live at end of March 22.

A log of calls is maintained to track the number of calls coming in, type of request and advice given. Over the first three months the helpline received over 3000 calls, an average of over 250 per week, answering and offering advice or redirection for each.

