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Peer volunteering

An innovative approach in striving towards achieving normal childbirth in asylum seeking & refugee women



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Melanie Haith-Cooper, University of Bradford
Marie-Clare Balaam, UCLAN
Emily Wood, Chair, Maternity Stream
Diana Flores, Trustee, Maternity Stream

Symposium

- **Introduction**
- **Paper 1** -Meeting the health and social care needs of pregnant Asylum Seeking & Refugee (AS&R) women through befriending
- **Paper 2** The impact of befriending on the volunteers
- **Paper 3** The development of the Maternity Stream of the City of Sanctuary
- **Questions**



Becoming a Mum



“ When I gave birth to my son it was something else – something more than happiness.” Chantilal Karimath

Forced to flee your Country for fear of your life An asylum seeker or refugee



Wealth of knowledge and experience

Refugee Council's Health Befriending Network

- Project duration 2011-2014
- National project covering 4 areas
- Targeted AS&R to offer peer support
- *“Asylum seekers and are the least likely people to volunteer but the most likely if asked.”* Rich Lynch 2011
- Asked mothers at Choto Moni who asked their peers to volunteer
- Untapped potential; women spoke over 30 languages
- Gave 20 hours instead of 3 per week
- Support throughout pregnancy up to 2 months postnatal



*Inspirational Women
They know that “you can’t
stand alone in this world”*

Paper 1

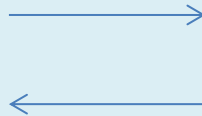
Meeting the health and social care needs of pregnant Asylum Seeking and Refugee (AS&R) women through befriending



Recently migrated women

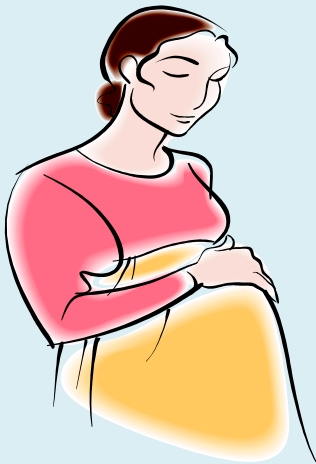
Voluntary migration

- Economic migrants
- Students
- Spouse visa



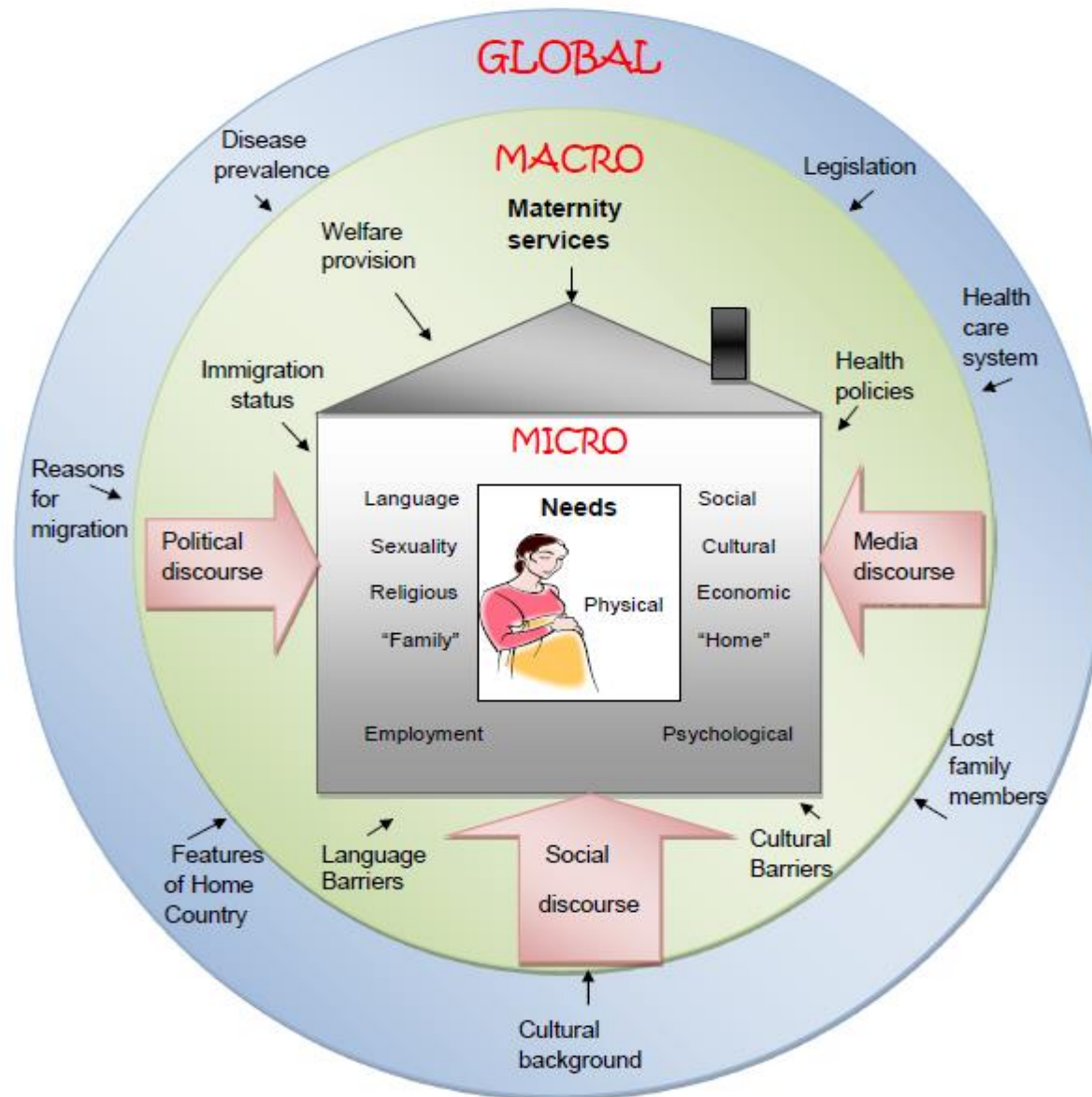
Forced migration

- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Trafficked women
- Slaves

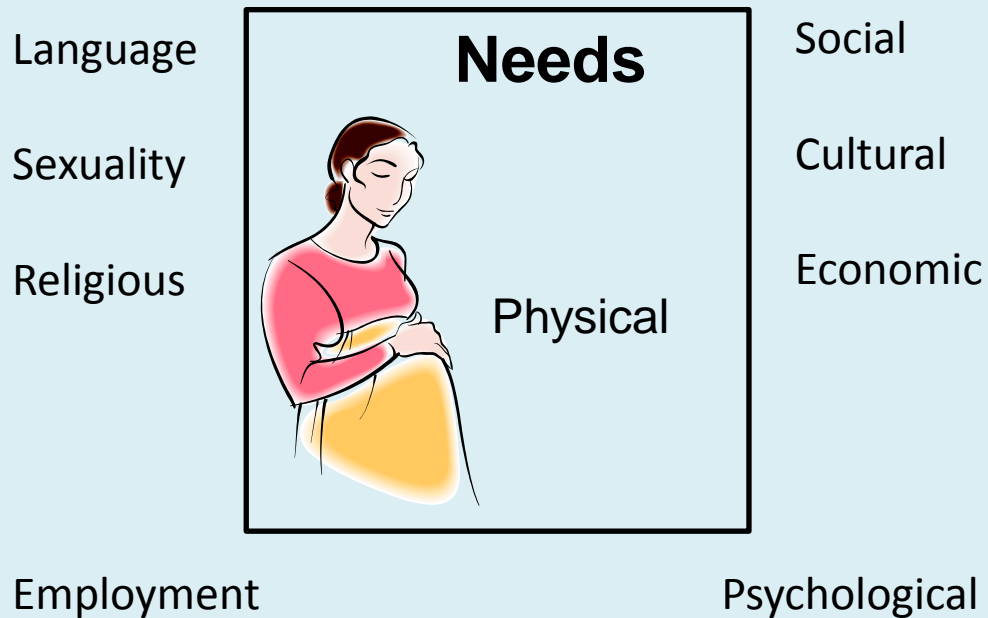


Was pregnancy a choice?

The Pregnant Woman within the Global Context Model (Haith-Cooper & Bradshaw 2013)



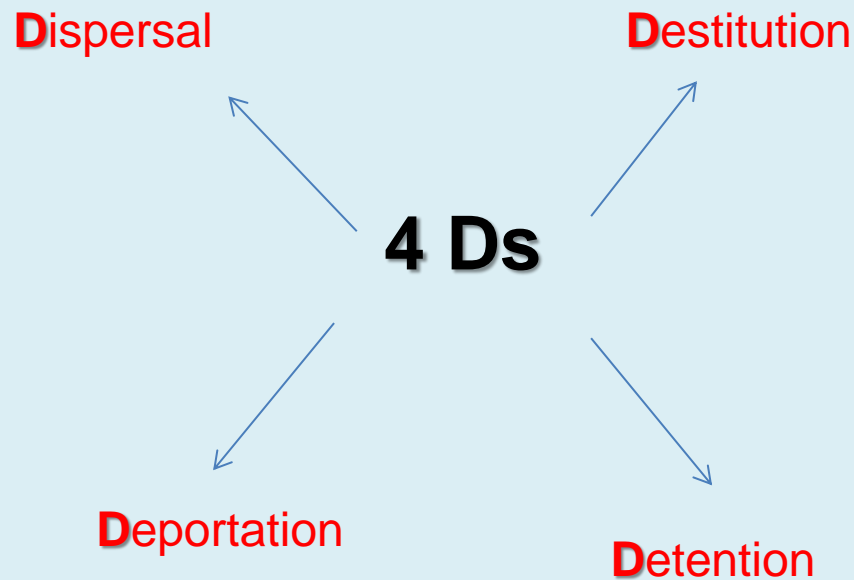
Holistic needs



The micro layer



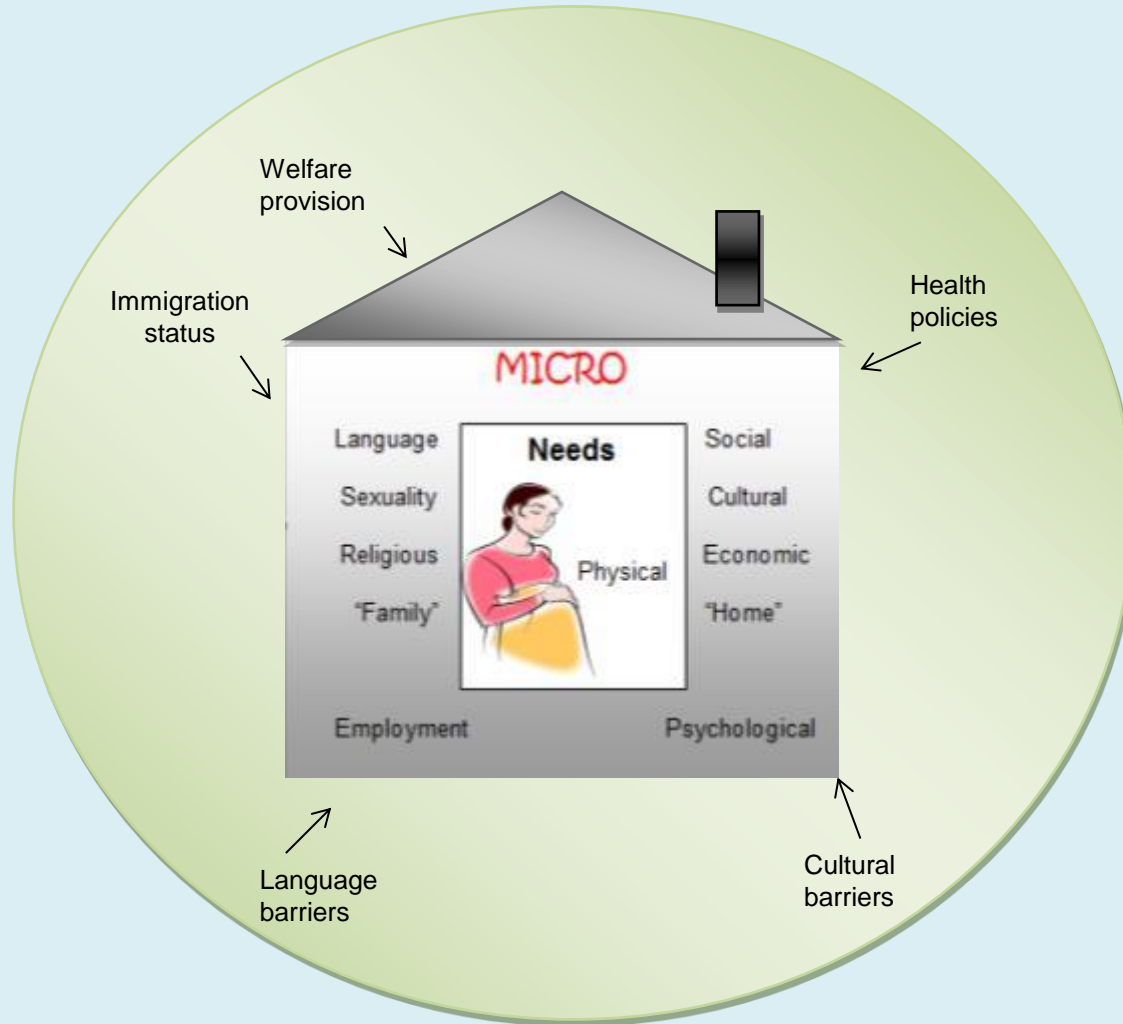
The UK and pregnant AS women



2014 Immigration Act & refused asylum seekers/ undocumented migrants

- Entitled to access NHS maternity care but may be asked to pay for care.
- Maternity care is 'immediately necessary' care and must not be withheld because the woman is unable to pay in advance; antenatal, intranatal and postnatal care and HIV treatment
- May be asked to pay for secondary care considered 'non-urgent'. This can be refused if the woman is unable to pay in advance. Only clinicians can decide on the urgency of treatment.
- GPs have the discretion to register refused asylum seekers
- Entitled to free NHS care for: compulsory mental health treatment, testing and treatment for communicable disease, emergency care provided in Accident and Emergency.

UK influences

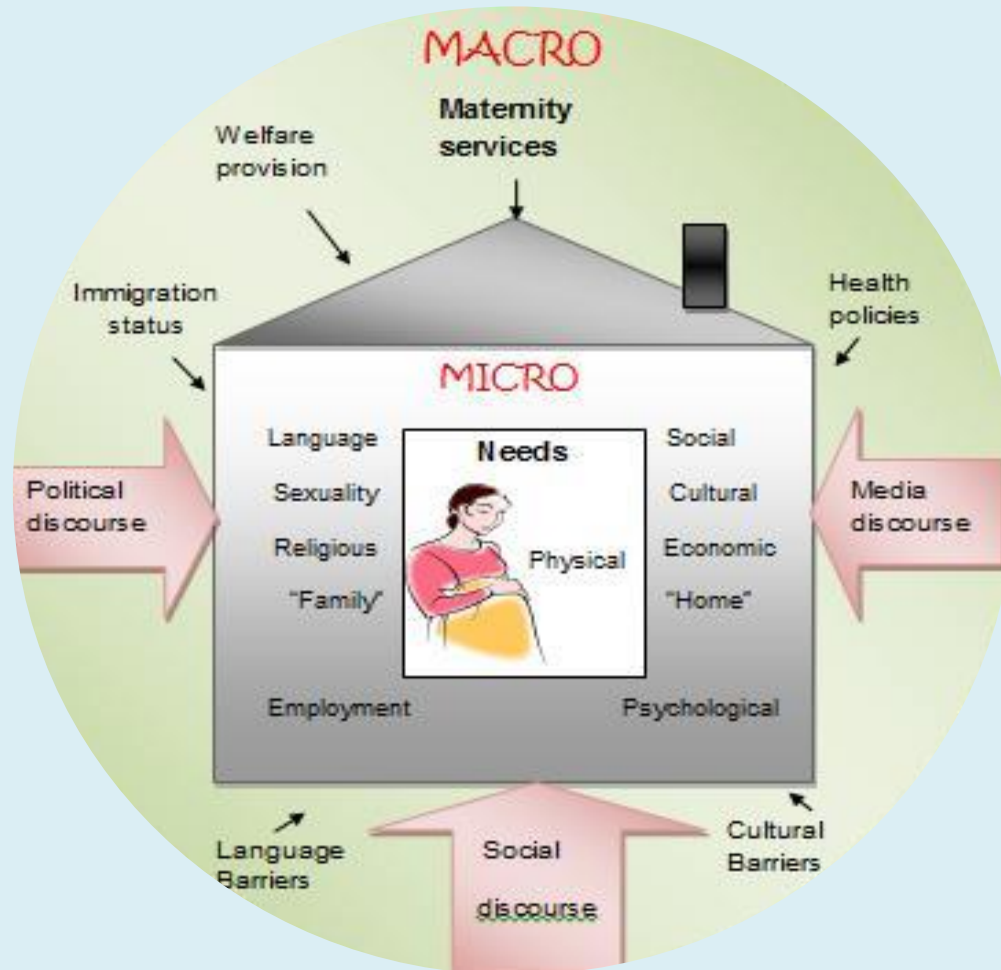


Reality for pregnant AS&R women

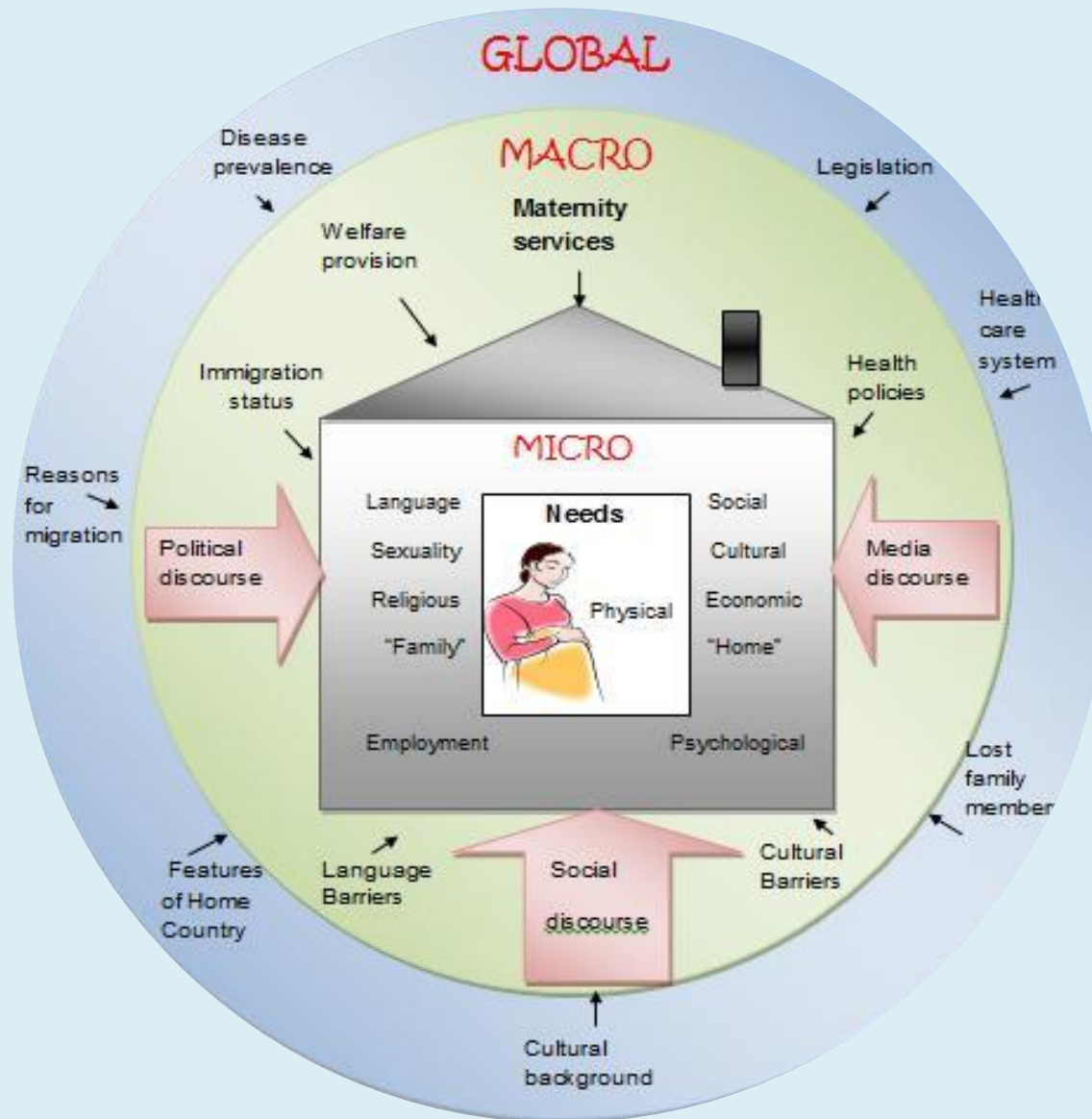
- Negative dominant discourse around immigration
- Poor mental & physical health
- Poverty & social exclusion
- Difficulties accessing GP services (Shortall et al 2015)
- Poor pregnancy outcomes (NICE 2010, CMACE 2011)
- Poor attitudes, discrimination and racism (Gaudion & Allotey 2008, Waugh 2010, Briscoe & Lavendar 2009)



The macro layer



The global layer



Health befriender training

- Debriefing
- Listening skills
- Confidentiality
- Boundaries
- Risk management
- Limitations
- Empowerment
- Asylum process
- Differences between home and UK in accessing maternity/health care
- FGM
- HIV
- Mental health
- Domestic violence
- Child protection
- 3rd Sector support



How befrienders supported clients

- 1:1 weekly meetings – built **trusting** relationships
- Listened and empathised
- Accompanied to appointments e.g. midwifery, GP, consultant, dental,, mental health and HIV.
- Emotional support
- Health issues uncovered e.g. Domestic abuse, HIV suicidal thoughts
- Some women listened to the befriender more than a health professional
- Life time treatment for HIV costs NHS up to 1 million!
- Signposted to services such as ESOL & counselling



How befrienders supported clients

- Accompanied women wherever they wanted e.g. drop in services, charity shops, parks
- Visited solicitors/ housing advisor
- Reported activities to co-ordinator and raised alarm if concerned
- Attended interagency meetings
- Wrote letters of support e.g. to try to stop dispersal
- Accompanied to activities e.g. Asmarina voices,
- *“I was able to forget I was an asylum seeker for a day”*
- Accompanied to specialist NCT antenatal classes at Choto Moni



NCT at Choto Moni Children's Centre

- Free weekly drop in, rolling programme
- Crèche & interpreters
- Contents totally group led
- One hour - sewing led by local woman, socialising & supporting individuals
- 90 minutes discussion / practice of physical skills for birth or parenting
- Clothing exchange
- Antenatal & postnatal groups
- A safe environment in which to share hopes, fears & experiences
- Build a community



Should men be at the birth? Will I give birth alone?



Compare maternity care back home and in the UK.
Give women a choice and belief in themselves.
More normal births??

The benefits of befriending

Accessing services

'I was too frightened to see a midwife because I thought she would tell the Home Office and I would be deported.'

My befriender told me the midwife would be confidential and we went together.'



'I couldn't think about my pregnancy because I was homeless.'

My befriender took me to see a housing officer and now I have a home'



The benefits of befriending

Mental health

'Waiting for a decision from the Home Office is like living in limbo. I got depressed and suicidal. My befriender listened to me, joined a choir with me, gave me hope and made me believe that life was worth fighting for'



The benefits of befriending

Domestic abuse

'I told my befriender that my partner had kicked me on my caesarean scar.

She went with me to the hospital and to a support group. She was like the sister I never had. She saved me.'



Diana and Emily –life as clients...



Pause for thought....



The health befriending project had benefits for the volunteers as well.....



Paper 2

The impact of befriending on the volunteers



Focusing on the befrienders

- Befriending is an increasingly popular strategy for providing social support to promote well being in a number of areas.
- However most research on befriending looks at the benefits to the befriended not the befrienders (Balaam 2015)
- We wanted to explore the experiences of women who worked as a volunteer befrienders.



Marie-Clare's study

- Ethical clearance
- Qualitative interviews with 17 women
- Thematic analysis
- Discussions with project leader
- 5 key themes emerged related to benefits of befriending for volunteers



5 themes

- Overcoming mistrust and building trusting relationships
- Developing new connections
- Moving on
- Increased resilience
- confidence



1.Overcoming mistrust & building trustful relationships

- Volunteers understood women's experience of
 - not being trusted
 - not trusting
 - fear of speaking out.

“At first, I thought she was a spy for the Home Office”

- Slowly built trusting relationships
- Disclose when they feel safe
- Boundaries and confidentiality

“a friend but not a friend”.



Dasha's story

- “Three out five clients were suicidal. As a volunteer you know you need to provide a solution or a listening ear.
- Building is the key word in befriending. Whilst my clients were busy building barriers between themselves & the outside world I am constantly building trust, whilst they build ways to avoid communicating with anyone I would be a step ahead building that friendship.
- And a real turning point in each relationship is their lowest points when they crumble & you pick them up and build them up.
- Their trust is the most rewarding aspect of the volunteering. It has provided me with confidence in myself because I see now I can make a difference in someone's life.”



2. Developing new connections

- Peer support meetings -share experiences, got support & ideas & direct own learning
- Greatest risk – can't solve problems just help people through them

“The befrienders are like a family.”

- Courses – first aid, Express Yourself, UK job market & Bright and Shiny!
- Receptive to Health education

“Because of that job I am always doing another course.”



3. Moving on

- Can challenge ‘Living in Limbo’
- Clients become volunteers
- Volunteers found employment or education
- Many want to be health professionals, social workers or policewomen
- Higher aspirations

“ I can do anything now!”

“The volunteering makes me understand that if I push myself I am able to get wherever I want to be and do whatever I want to do. I am thinking to become a midwife in the future.”



4. Increased resilience

- Befriending acts to increase social support available to those involved (both clients & befrienders)
- Support their ability to cope with the situation in which they find themselves

“It teaches you how to be stronger”

- to regain sense of identity

“you lose everything in this process”

“I picked up the old me that was in the box”



Making friends and having fun!

- Wonderful Women events
- Choir; Asmarina voices
- Performing at West Yorkshire Playhouse



“I used to think I was like a piece of meat that could be kicked around. I can’t believe that people are clapping ME!”



“I know everyone now”

Escaping to the Countryside

- 6 free trips for mums & babies!
- Troubles left behind, fun with their children & gained hope that life can be better.
- Improved mental health and built confidence



“When speaking at a conference, I just imagined I was in the Yorkshire Dales and I felt calm”.



5. Confidence

- All the women reported increased confidence
“My doctor has taken me off my antidepressants because now I feel useful.”

- Voice for women e.g. Spokeswoman for Refugee Council Dignity in pregnancy campaign at the House of Commons!

- Representing the Refugee Council

“I used to think I was nothing and now I think I am something and when I wear my Refugee Council badge I feel like a professional.”

- Setting up the Maternity Stream of Sanctuary
“Volunteering for the Refugee Council has been my resurrection.”



Diana and Emily –life as befrienders...



Funding for the Health Befriending project ran out: BUT befriending worth investing in.

	Total 2.5 years	Per year average
Volunteers recruited	80	32
Volunteers trained	76	30
No. of volunteers with asylum background	61	24
No. of clients matched with volunteers	168	67
No. of clients briefed on health access	6130	2452
No. of volunteers who have gone onto further training	42	16
No. of volunteers who have gone onto employment	22	9
No. On reduced benefit	16	6
No. of volunteers trained to use technology to access health information	16	6

- Social Return on Investment £4.43 for every £1 spent
- Conservative estimate of economic impact of project £198,801 per annum

2014 Down but not out!



“This little light of mine, I’m going let it shine”

Pause for thought....

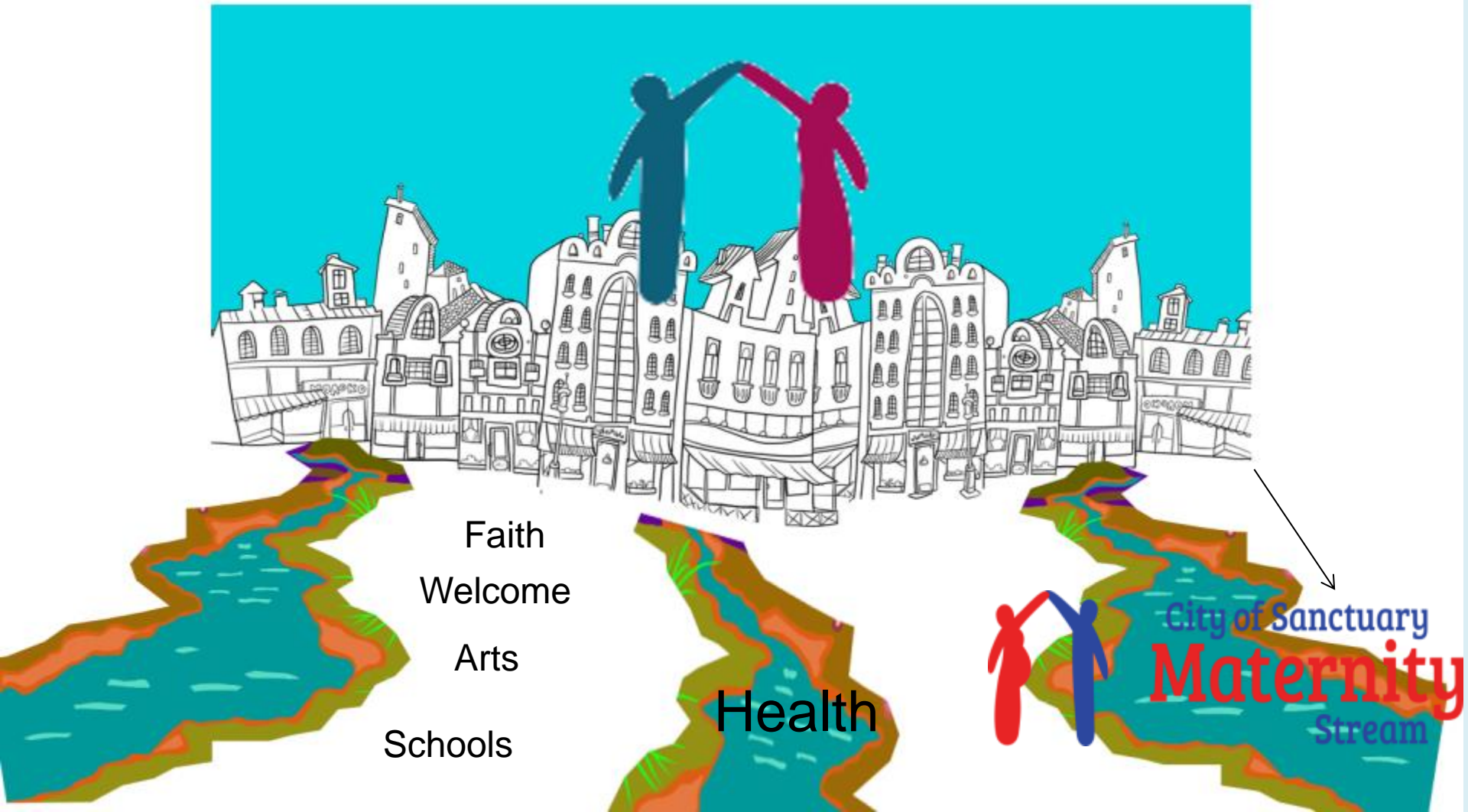


Paper 3

The development of the Maternity Stream of the City of Sanctuary



City of Sanctuary Streams





City of Sanctuary Maternity Stream

- Who? AS&R volunteers including women who befriended and established network of people and groups.
- Why? didn't want other mums to suffer as we had suffered".
- Aim to work with maternity services to develop in a way that overcomes inequalities
- How? Improve access, experiences and outcomes of maternity services for AS&R women through the maternity SOS award



<http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/maternity>

Maternity Service of Sanctuary (SOS) award



- Engage Maternity care provides
 1. Learn
 2. Embed
 3. Share
- Use Maternity Stream resources
- Celebration and opportunity for reflective learning
- Written evidence
- AS&R volunteers help with learning
- Evaluation by appraisal group and presentation at award ceremony

The work of the volunteers

- Created 2 Maternity Stream of Sanctuary films
- Monthly peer support meetings
- National and International nursing and midwifery conferences
- Charing conferences
- Service users within a university
- Talking in parliament
- Health Watch
- Maternity Services Liaison Committee
- Awareness raising sessions for women, student midwives, social workers, medics & university staff



25+ Volunteers

Bradford Service User group



“Before going, I felt too low for this place. How could I guide students when they know more than me ? I pushed myself, I had to do it.”
“Afterwards I felt more confident, more human and valued”

Young refugee mum from Ethiopia

Recruitment

Assessment

Teaching

Research



Impact

“Of all of the sessions I have partaken in so far in my midwifery training, this one left the biggest impression on me. I will never forget the journeys of the women we were lucky enough to be in the company of, or wiping away tears as unimaginable experiences were recited (with laughter and smiles!) by figures of utter strength and determination. I left the session feeling awe for those who can find the strength required to carry on through such desperate times, and determination to never again show allegiance to a system which only serves to prolong them.”

Year 2 midwifery student

Excellence in Maternity Care Conference so far..

- Waiting list to attend
- Launch of films and award
- Conference template to be repeated in Hull and beyond



Maternity stream resources



- Women's stories
- 'Excellence in Maternity care' model
- The women and their stories on film
<http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/maternity/films>
- 'The Pregnant Woman Within the Global Context' model
- Other resources on the website
<http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/maternity/resources>

Building a community

70 people attended Summer outing to Soltaire



This summer a weekend break in the Yorkshire Dales!



Diana and Emily –life as Maternity Stream volunteers...



In Conclusion

- Pregnant AS&R women are a vulnerable group
- Befrienders can help women access services and improve experiences and outcomes of maternity care
- Through the Maternity Stream AS&R women have a voice
- Together we can address inequalities and improve maternity care for **ALL** women and their families



The Maternity Stream of the City of Sanctuary

<http://maternity.cityofsanctuary.org/>

Please like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter

@maternity_CofS

**Any
questions ??**



City of Sanctuary
Maternity
Stream

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