

How lockdown has affected me

Polly's story

Polly Yu is mum to two young children. She is also an NCT breast feeding counsellor, antenatal teacher, and co-chair of the Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) at Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust. She talks about how lockdown has affected her and how she has adapted to continue supporting new parents.

“Before lockdown I held face-to-face classes, home visits and phone calls for NCT parents and babies. Weekly antenatal classes would be attended by up to eight couples where I would provide support on preparing for birth, feeding and early parenthood. I also volunteered at the local NCT ‘Bumps & Babies’ group for pregnant women, new parents and their babies and children.

As part of the MVP team at Royal Surrey, I usually visit the hospital regularly to speak with new mums and meet with the midwifery team. Walking around the antenatal assessment unit and postnatal wards, I would talk to mothers about their experiences, listen to their stories and feedback to the midwifery team, and look at information they were given.



“I remember the day lockdown was announced. I had a class scheduled, which unfortunately I had to postpone at the last minute and I had to find different ways to keep providing support without face-to-face contact. I started using Zoom (video conferencing) and continued to provide support on the phone.”

NCT courses are now working really well on Zoom and I’m continuing to provide support on the phone. Staff at Royal Surrey’s maternity unit are using Facebook Live to stay in touch and share useful information for new and expectant mums. These are really popular, and the MVP team are also using social media to reach out to new parents and provide information and advice.

Not seeing someone face-to-face is not easy, but it is surprisingly more doable than I expected. I’ve found that I need to ask more questions to get a better understanding and build a better image and I also have to be more descriptive and provide more detailed explanations.

Many parents have fed back that lockdown has, understandably, left them feeling more alone. They are receiving less in-built support, for example, from grandparents with siblings. We are trying to plug that gap a little by providing lots of support, using technology and staying in touch on phone calls to make sure new parents are still receiving the support they need - and hopefully to help them feel a little less isolated.”

If you would like information, advice and support on health and care services in Surrey, please visit our [website](#) or contact our Helpdesk on 0303 303 0023. We also have a dedicated page on [Changes to health care services during COVID-19](#).

If you would like to share your own experience of health or social care services, please get in touch via phone (0303 303 0023), text (07952 787533), email (enquiries@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk) or by completing our [online feedback form](#).

For further information on Royal Surrey's Maternity Voices Partnership, please visit the MVP Facebook page www.facebook.com/royalsurreymvp or Instagram www.instagram.com/royalsurreymaternityvoices

If you are pregnant or a new parent, you can visit the NCT website www.nct.org.uk, which includes lots of articles on COVID19 and pregnancy, birth and early parenting. The NCT infant feeding support line (0300 330 0700) is open 8am to midnight every day and offers free support for feeding your baby.