

## Reducing digital inequalities in maternity services for refugees and asylum-seeking women



### **Background**

We were commissioned by Surrey Heartlands Health & Care Partnership to gather insights on the challenges faced by refugees and asylum-seeking women when accessing maternity services. The project aimed to identify ways in which Surrey Heartlands can optimise maternity support, with a focus on digital inequalities.

### **Our approach**

We held two phases of engagement for this project;

#### **Phase 1: Situational analysis/stakeholder engagement**

Engaging with key stakeholders that surround and support the women to understand more about the potential pain points, barriers to access and to map the key services and support available.

#### **Phase 2: immersive listening/engagement with refugees and asylum seeking women.**

This was led by the findings in the situational analysis to allow qualitative

feedback from a small sample of women who were currently accessing maternity services. The line of enquiry was designed to be sensitive and respectful to any of the women's personal situation and to gain understanding of any digital inclusion barriers to accessing information and services.

Interviews were undertaken with seven representatives from services, support and advocacy groups, focussed on supporting refugee and asylum-seeking women and eight refugee women (6 with babies and/or currently pregnant, living in temporary accommodation). Interviews took place between May and July 2022 in Staines (North West Surrey) and Redhill (East Surrey).

## **Our findings**

The key findings from both phases of engagement were analysed and pulled into a report for Surrey Heartlands with recommendations based on the findings. The recommendations included;

- Continuing to work to bridge the language gaps
- Providers ensuring they take responsibility for signposting, explanation of pathways and for ensuring refugee and asylum-seeking women understand the expected standards of care for services
- Identifying those with poor access to digital information
- Focussing digital development on core information relating directly to an individual's own care
- Harnessing the power and credibility of other refugee and asylum-seeking women to bridge the cultural and language gaps

The full report can be found here: <https://www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Reducing-Digital-Inequalities-in-Maternity-Services-for-Refugees-Asylum-Seeking-women-FINAL.pdf>

The report was shared with Surrey Heartlands who will use the insight and ideas when developing digital initiatives to help reduce inequalities for refugee and asylum-seeking women.

**"I think the research has been a great piece of work and the report provides a very rich picture and gives us lots of insight and ideas. I will keep you updated on any initiatives we are able to take forward from it" – Jane Lackenby, Children's Digital Programme Manager, Surrey Heartlands**