

## **Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Newham Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership Quarter 3 Report (October - December 2024)**

### **Who We Are, and What We Do**

We, the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP), are a collaborative team dedicated to gathering and understanding feedback and experiences from women, birthing people, and families who use maternity and neonatal services across Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, and Newham. Our focus includes the entire maternity journey, from registering with a midwife to pregnancy care, birth experiences, and postnatal care from midwives, health visitors, GPs, and infant feeding services.

We listen to service users' feedback and experiences through surveys, Walk the Patch and 15 Steps for Maternity, community engagements, online outreach on the Peanut platform and local Facebook groups, as well as focus groups. We also attend meetings, including those with Barts Health NHS Trust and the Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS), to represent the voices of women, birthing people, and families across all three boroughs.

We are independent of the NHS but work closely in partnership with services to inform, challenge, drive positive change, and celebrate good practice. By amplifying the perspectives of diverse communities and co-producing with Barts Health NHS Trust, we aim to improve maternity and neonatal services while addressing health inequalities. This report covers the work undertaken by MNVP Chairs across all three boroughs during Quarter Three (October to December 2024).

### **Our Collaborations and Impact this Quarter**

#### **Walk the Patch and 15 Steps Maternity Survey**

In this quarter, we held Walk the Patch every month in each hospital within Barts Health NHS Trust, where we spoke with birthing women on maternity wards, postnatal wards, the discharge lounge, and antenatal clinics. We worked together with midwives, consultants, and hospital staff, particularly patient experience midwives, and involved our members in participation. Our MNVP Chairs gathered feedback through

questionnaires and identified themes that have been improved, as well as areas that need further improvement.

Our MNVP Chairs also conducted a 15 Steps Maternity Survey Visit at The Royal London Hospital, covering the neonatal ward, Transitional Care, and the Postnatal Ward, as well as another 15 Steps Maternity Survey Visit at Whipps Cross Hospital. These visits were thoroughly planned in collaboration with both hospitals' Patient Experience Midwives. Through 15 Steps, we helped identify and suggest areas for improvement to the Trust, ensuring better experiences for women and their families. This included making information more accessible by reviewing the facilities, language content and improving the visibility of posters, particularly for individuals from targeted or marginalised communities or those with specific needs (e.g., LGBTQ+, refugees, survivors of domestic violence, and people with hearing impairments, blindness, or other disabilities).

Furthermore, we also engaged with the Maternal Medicine Teams and conducted Walk the Patch at the hypertension clinic at The Royal London Hospital. Recognising the impact of chronic medical conditions alongside pregnancy and breastfeeding journeys, we were eager to listen to service users' needs, understand what matters to them, and provide recommendations to the Maternal Medicine Teams.

### **Community Outreach through Our Monthly Coffee Mornings**

These are some of the community locations we visited this quarter through our Coffee Mornings and Outreach sessions, where we engaged in-person with service users about their experiences and needs throughout their maternity journey:

- Shipman Youth Zone, Newham
- St Luke's Community Centre, Newham
- Wapping and Bigland Children's Centre, Tower Hamlets
- Ocean Children and Family Centre, Tower Hamlets
- Higham Hill Library, Waltham Forest
- Leytonstone Library, Waltham Forest

One of the highlights of this quarter was our joint focus group sessions with Sister Circle and Serene Beginnings at Shipman Youth Zone, which was attended predominantly by BAME women and birthing people.

All feedback and comments gathered from service users through Walk the Patch and Coffee Mornings are summarised and listed in the appendix section of this report.

## **Quarterly Meeting Event with Service Users**

At the end of the quarter, we successfully held our quarterly meeting for service users from all three boroughs at Discover Children’s Story Centre, Stratford, on 13 December 2024. The event attracted around 54 service users who registered via our booking platform, with 14 service users attending in person. The event was highly engaging, with enthusiastic participation from Barts Health NHS Trust representatives (The Royal London Hospital, Newham Hospital, and Whipps Cross Hospital).

The atmosphere was vibrant and collaborative, with service users actively engaging in discussions, eagerly sharing their experiences, and showing great enthusiasm for working together with healthcare staff to drive meaningful improvements in maternity services. There was also a strong commitment from both service users and Barts Health NHS Trust to co-produce solutions and ensure service improvements were guided by lived experiences, particularly by reviewing key findings from the Maternity CQC Survey 2022/2023.

In addition, we hosted information stalls featuring partner organisations, including Serene Beginnings, Healthwatch Newham, Healthwatch Tower Hamlets, Healthwatch Waltham Forest, Parents in Mind (NCT), Tower Hamlets Family Hub, Newham Family Hub, and Waltham Forest Family Hub. Representatives from NEL LMNS and Newham Public Health were also in attendance.

Feedback about the event was overwhelmingly positive. One service user expressed their gratitude for having the opportunity to share their experiences directly with healthcare staff, while others appreciated the availability of childcare staff at the event, which allowed mothers to fully focus on providing their feedback.

The full report of this event can be found on our website page.

## **Advocating the Voice of Service Users at Barts Health NHS Trust Meetings**

Our MNVP Chairs have actively participated in the following meetings with Barts Health NHS Trust:

- Newham University Hospital – Perinatal Improvement Steering Group
- NUH Maternity and Neonatal Committee
- Royal London Hospital (RLH) Safety Champion Meetings
- RLH HG Pregnancy Sickness Support
- RLH Breastfeeding Network Peer Support Session
- RLH Care Outside Guidance Co-Working Group
- ELY Event
- Newham Quality Improvement for Postnatal Flow Meeting

- Newham – Guidance for Women Declining Induction of Labour (potentially a Standard Operating Procedure - SOP)
- Newham Barts Maternity Guidelines Group Meeting
- MNVP Work Plan and Benchmarking Self-Assessment meeting with LMNS and Barts Health NHS Trust
- We have also been involved with the Newham Maternity Education Team on research related to hyperemesis gravidarum.

Each MNVP Chair brings insights gathered from their engagement with service users, ensuring that discussions in each meeting remain relevant to service users' needs. These meetings also helped us to stay updated and remain involved in developments and changes within maternity and neonatal services at the Trust level. Our chairs also attended a Maternity Safety Support Programme (MSSP) webinar hosted by NHS England.

### **Expanding Our Relationship with Local Partners and the Community**

Our project manager, Rosie, has been presenting our MNVP work to local residents and stakeholders at various events, including Healthwatch Newham's public event *"The Value of Listening"*, CQC Sphere Support's Black History Month event, and the Healthwatch Newham Advisory Board meeting.

We have also initiated relationships with the Waltham Forest Public Health team and Parents in Mind Newham to advocate for our work and amplify service users' voices and to explore what we can do together.

We recognise the importance of working closely with local authorities and local CVS that share our goal of improving the overall pregnancy journey. It will help us to reach targeted and marginalised groups of service users, ensuring their voices are heard and that they receive equal opportunities within the services.

### **Closing the Loop**

We are now officially part of the Newham Health and Care Communications Network and have a regular section in their People Panel Newsletter. We are also in contact with the Barts Health NHS Trust newsletter and the Newham Inclusive Newsletter to feature our work and reach more women and families. This ensures they are aware that we are here to listen to their feelings and lived experiences throughout their pregnancy journey.

We are committed to closing the loop by ensuring that when people share their experiences with us, they are heard, their feedback is valued, and actions are taken as a result. The platforms mentioned above serve as important channels for us to

communicate these changes and keep service users informed about the impact of their voices.

## **Our Focus for the Next Quarter**

Our priorities for the next quarter (January to March 2025) include co-producing the MNVP work plan and action plan based on the findings from the Maternity CQC Survey 2023/2024, in collaboration with patient experience midwives and Barts Health NHS Trust. Additionally, we plan to integrate key survey findings into our Walk the Patch list of questions to ensure service users' voices are included in assessing progress in maternity and neonatal services.

To strengthen community engagement, we aim to recruit service users as active volunteers, known as MNVP Community Champions. This initiative will increase our presence in the community and encourage greater involvement from service users in our work.

By the end of March, we intend to launch a mailing list subscription, providing a dedicated platform to keep MNVP members updated on upcoming Walk the Patch and 15 Steps visits, coffee mornings, and additional family resources for service users.

We are also pleased to announce that our next Quarterly Meeting will take place at Leytonstone Library, Walthamstow, on 24 April 2025, and we look forward to welcoming service users and service providers to the event.

Finally, we appreciate the support from Barts Health NHS Trust and LMNS in introducing a Neonatal Lead role into our work, which will play an important part in bridging gaps in TWN MNVP's contribution in neonatal services. We look forward to sharing updates on this role and its work plan in the next Quarterly Report.

## Appendix

### Summary of Feedback - Newham

No.	Area to Discuss	Comments from Service Users
1.	Waiting Times upon Arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Antenatal appointments were generally on time, with a maximum wait of one hour.</li> <li>- A few women had to wait a long time for induction after arriving for their scheduled induction. For example, one mother was scheduled for induction on the 19th but only received a bed on the 21st.</li> <li>- A few women reported that their planned C-section appointments were on time as scheduled.</li> <li>- One woman had to wait 12 hours in triage for assessment before being moved to the antenatal ward.</li> </ul>
2.	Information Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information was well provided and communicated to service users.</li> <li>- No reported issues with access of information on antenatal appointments.</li> </ul>
2,	Service Users with Specific Needs (e.g. translation, chronic illness, disabilities, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two women who spoke mainly Bengali and Urdu were provided with translators or relied on their partners for translation.</li> <li>- Two women with gestational diabetes, as well as others with high blood pressure, infection control needs, low PAPP-A levels, dropped baby heartbeats, and high-risk pregnancies, all reported that their needs were well managed.</li> </ul>
3.	Staff Behaviour and Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff made women feel comfortable, particularly those with anxiety, by providing a counsellor.</li> <li>- Elective C-sections were well explained, including the associated risks. Both doctors and midwives were supportive and caring.</li> <li>- Very supportive staff, who helped women feel looked after, calm, and at ease.</li> <li>- Encouraging and understanding staff, though experiences varied—some midwives were very understanding, while others were not.</li> <li>- The theatre experience was positive, with staff being kind and responsive.</li> <li>- Women who had elective C-sections found staff very supportive during recovery, and postnatal ward experiences were generally fine.</li> <li>- Most women had midwives supporting them throughout their pregnancy journey (labour, induction, postnatal care). However, one woman felt that midwives did not take her seriously when she believed she was showing signs of labour.</li> </ul>
4	Labour and Post Natal Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Labour experiences were generally good.</li> <li>- However, there were multiple complaints about postnatal ward facilities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Toilets were reported to be very dirty.</li> <li>- Food quality was very poor.</li> <li>- Rooms were cold, but heaters were provided.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

5.	Breastfeeding Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most service users received breastfeeding support and, overall, found it good.</li> <li>- However, two women said they did not receive any breastfeeding support but were not given any reason why.</li> </ul>
6.	Why would you recommend/not recommend this hospital?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most service users said they would recommend the hospital.</li> <li>- Two said they would not recommend it, and one said "maybe."</li> </ul>
7.	Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve communication in antenatal clinics, as service users often had to repeat information—better documentation is needed.</li> <li>- Improve cleanliness across especially in the post natal ward.</li> <li>- Improve staff response times to call buttons and requests; midwives should regularly check on mothers and ask if they need anything.</li> <li>- Provide more personalised breastfeeding support.</li> </ul>

### Summary of Feedback - Tower Hamlets

No.	Area to Discuss	Comments from Service Users
1.	Waiting Times upon Arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A few women reported their scheduled induction was cancelled at the last minute due to no bed availability.</li> <li>- Long waiting times at triage after initial assessment.</li> <li>- Some women who went into spontaneous labour (without induction) received a labour bed quite quickly.</li> <li>- Waiting times on antenatal appointment services were reported as good.</li> <li>- Day of induction was stressful—one woman was told to go to Whipps Cross but was later redirected to Royal London by another midwife.</li> </ul>
2,	Service Users with Specific Needs (e.g. translation, chronic illness, disabilities, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three women with gestational diabetes found out through blood tests; action was taken, but they felt it could have been detected earlier. One mother expressed concerns about diabetes as she had gained 20kg early in pregnancy, but the midwife did not refer her early.</li> <li>- One high-risk pregnancy was self-monitored via an app.</li> <li>- One woman required a Bengali translator, which was provided.</li> <li>- One woman with a high-risk pregnancy and requiring HDU care from the fetal medicine unit received excellent treatment and personalised care from a consultant.</li> </ul>
3.	Staff Behaviour and Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most service users felt supported by midwives throughout their pregnancy journey (antenatal to postnatal).</li> <li>- Most service users said staff were very helpful, especially in the labour ward. However, one service user complained that postnatal staff were not very helpful or attentive.</li> <li>- Staff were professional, efficient, very caring, provided detailed information, and always sought informed consent.</li> <li>- One woman reported that concerns about her baby were dismissed. The baby vomited multiple times, and parents raised</li> </ul>

		<p>concerns three times, but midwives disregarded them. Another midwife properly assessed the baby, contacted a doctor, and the baby was sent to NICU.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some felt care was not personalised, and midwives did not always listen to parents' concerns.</li> <li>- NICU staff were reported as amazing.</li> </ul>
4.	Labour and Post Natal Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most reported positive experiences in the labour ward. However, some women rang the bell but waited a long time for a response.</li> <li>- Labour staff (midwives and doctors) provided good care, were attentive, explained everything clearly, and always sought informed consent.</li> <li>- Pain relief options were explained and provided.</li> <li>- Both scheduled and emergency C-sections were handled well—staff detected risks early and offered C-sections when necessary.</li> <li>- Labour ward staff were aware when women felt anxious and helped them stay calm.</li> <li>- Communication about medication was unclear—some were unsure whether they had received cocodamol or the injection to thin blood.</li> <li>- Most service users found postnatal staff to be helpful and caring, with an overall good experience.</li> <li>- One service user reported that postnatal nurses were not helpful and seemed unapproachable. Another said they had to wait a long time before midwives attended to their pain complaints.</li> </ul>
5.	Breastfeeding Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eight women said they did not receive breastfeeding support or were not informed about drop-in sessions upon discharge.</li> <li>- Others reported receiving good breastfeeding support in both the hospital and community.</li> <li>- The Henry Team's breastfeeding support was praised by one of the service user.</li> </ul>
6.	Other: Maternity Mates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One service user received support from Maternity Mates and was very grateful.</li> </ul>
7.	Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve cleanliness in hospital facilities.</li> <li>- Increase staff in the triage area, as there is often no receptionist present.</li> <li>- Reduce waiting times in triage.</li> <li>- Provide more variety in food options and entertainment (e.g. TVs in wards).</li> <li>- Improve early detection of gestational diabetes and provide early referrals.</li> <li>- Midwives should explain information more slowly and take more time to educate service users rather than rushing.</li> </ul>

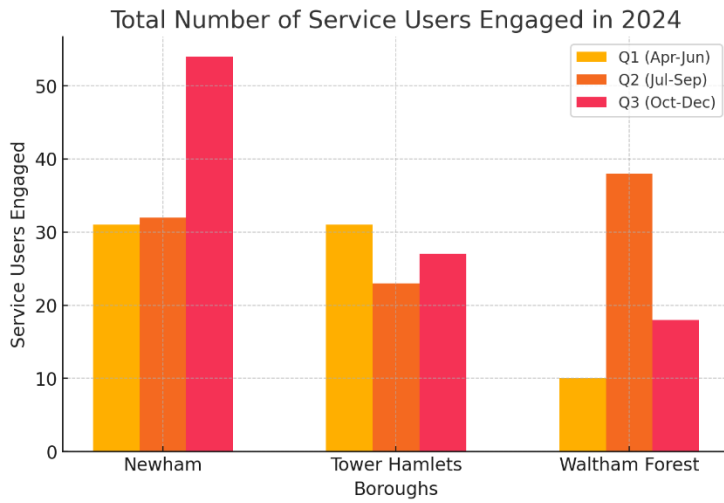


## Summary of Feedback - Waltham Forest

No.	Area to Discuss	Comments from Service Users
1.	Waiting Times upon Arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many service users reported long waiting times from arrival for their induction appointment to when a bed became available.</li> <li>- A few reported long waiting times in triage.</li> </ul>
2,	Service Users with Specific Needs (e.g. translation, chronic illness, disabilities, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two women who spoke Bengali required translation, which was available.</li> <li>- One woman with gestational diabetes was well cared for.</li> <li>- One woman who spoke Spanish required translation, which was available.</li> </ul>
3.	Staff Behaviour and Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most women said they had amazing experiences with midwives, especially in the labour and postnatal wards.</li> <li>- Staff were helpful and treated service users with compassion and kindness, especially the younger midwives.</li> <li>- Staff quickly identified high-risk cases and the need for emergency C-sections, ensuring informed consent was obtained.</li> <li>- NICU staff provided excellent care to babies, but some mothers felt their own needs were not prioritised.</li> <li>- One service user raised a complaint about agency midwives, stating that they were unprofessional, unsupervised by permanent staff, and dismissive of service users' concerns.</li> </ul>
4.	Antenatal, Labour and Post Natal Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overall, service users said antenatal appointments, including scans and blood tests, were excellent, especially with community midwives.</li> <li>- One service user found the labour ward experience traumatic as her labour process was prolonged, ultimately requiring forceps.</li> <li>- A service user who opted for a water birth was unable to proceed as planned. However, staff provided thorough explanations about emergency C-sections and ensured informed consent was obtained.</li> <li>- Staff in the postnatal ward were reported to be excellent.</li> </ul>
5.	Breastfeeding Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All service users reported receiving good breastfeeding support.</li> </ul>
6.	Why would you recommend/not recommend this hospital?	<p>Most service users said they would recommend the hospital. However, two service users said they would not recommend it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One had a traumatic experience due to a prolonged labour process that ended with forceps.</li> <li>- Another felt abandoned during labour (during contractions) and that her concerns were dismissed, leading to a second-degree tear</li> </ul>
7.	Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular check-ins from midwives in postnatal wards.</li> <li>- Improved communication and response times for women experiencing pain in the labour ward.</li> </ul>

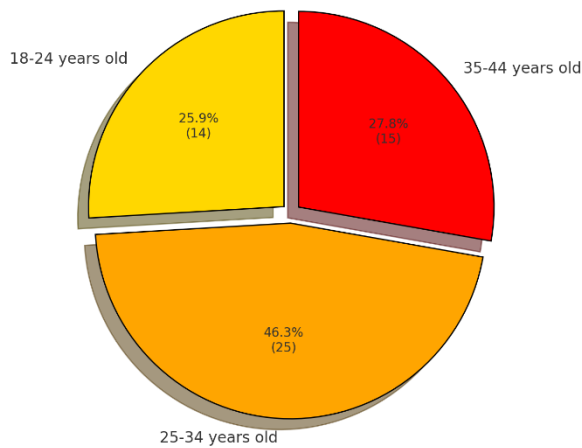
## Current Trends

### Number of Service Users Engaged Across Three Boroughs

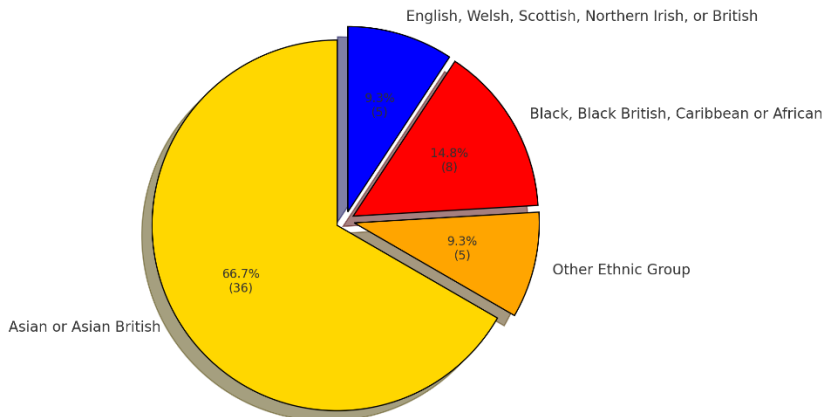


### Demographic of Service Users Engaged in Newham

Newham Age Group Distribution - Q3 (October - December 2024)



Newham Ethnicity Distribution - Q3 (October - December 2024)

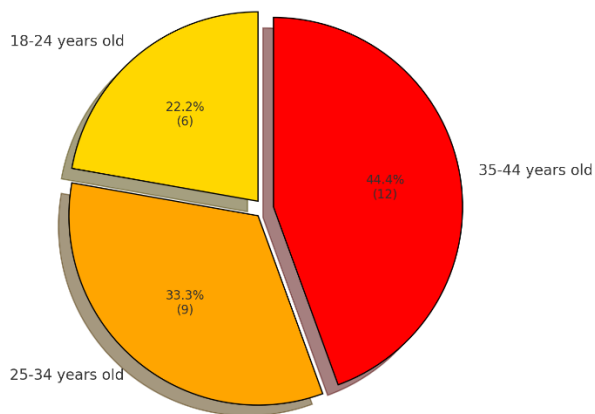


### Languages Spoken other than English:

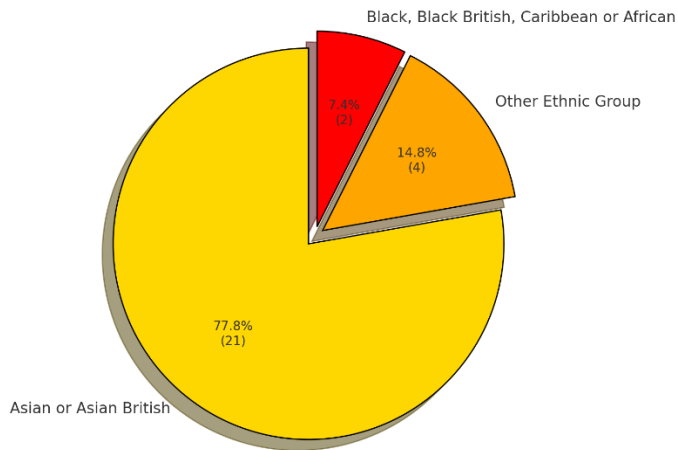
Language	No. of Service User
Romanian	1
Punjabi	2
Bengali	5
Urdu	4
Hindi	5
Turkish	1
Ghanian	1
Igbo	2
Arabic	1
Italian	2
Pashto	2
Polish	1
Farsi	1
Tamil	2
Portuguese	1
Somalian	2

### Demographic of Service Users Engaged in Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets Age Group Distribution - Q3 (October - December 2024)



Tower Hamlets Ethnicity Distribution - Q3 (October - December 2024)

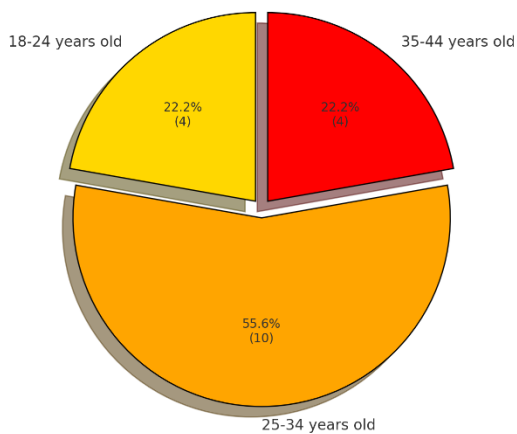


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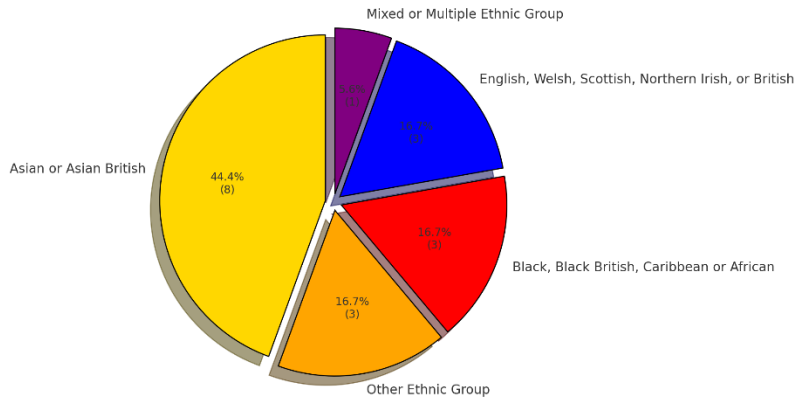
Language	No. of Service Users
Somalian	1
Italian	1
Hindi Gujarati	1
Romanian	2
Rusian	2
Bengali	3
Tamil	1
Urdu	1

**Demographic of Service Users Engaged in Waltham Forest**

Waltham Forest Age Group Distribution - Q3 (October - December 2024)



Waltham Forest Ethnicity Distribution - Q3 (October - December 2024)



### Languages Spoken Other Than English:

Language	No. of Service User
Somalian	1
Italian	1
Hindi Gujarati	1
Romanian	2
Rusian	1
Bengali	2
Tamil	1
Urdu	1
Spain	1

### Social Media Engagement Metrics

We have had an Instagram account since the end of March 2024 to share information and announce upcoming MNVP regular events, reshare peer support groups happening across the three boroughs, raise awareness, and promote survey opportunities for service users.

**Instagram handle:** *TWN Maternity and Neonatal Voices (@twn\_mnvp)*.

### Instagram Post Insight – Q3 Period (as of 31 December 2024)

- 1. Post Content:** The posts focused on promoting coffee morning events, the Quarterly Meeting for Service Users, support groups, and maternity surveys conducted within Barts Health NHS Trust.

## **2. Metrics:**

Likes: 68

Comments: 0

Shares: 15

Saves: 4

Reach: 634 unique users

Engagement Rate: 7%

Follower Growth: 2 new followers during this quarter

## **3. Audience Insights**

Demographics: 80% women, 20% men. The majority are aged 18–34 and based in London.

Engagement: Most users interacted through likes (64%), while 10% shared the content.

## **4. Analysis and Takeaways**

What Worked: The use of reels with slideshows, compilation videos of events, and interactive background music helped increase engagement.

Challenges: The frequency of posts remained low, and followers were unsure of the benefits of following the Instagram account. The content was primarily limited to MNVP events and activities, which may have limited its broader appeal.

Improvements:

- Future posts will include family events happening across the three boroughs.
- Relevant and popular hashtags should be used, and service providers' accounts (e.g. London MNVP, hospital accounts, and Healthwatch of the three boroughs) should be tagged.
- Media assets (flyers and posters) will be updated to include the Instagram account username to increase visibility.