

Supporting New Families

The programme was designed to support new mums who were less likely to engage in physical activity post-partum, effecting their mental, emotional and physical health.

Why was Supporting New Families launched?

All support services for pregnant women and post-partum women nationally were either cut or severely restricted during the pandemic. All face-to-face check-ups were restricted to mum only, all face-to-face Health Visitor visits were cancelled, all baby groups were cancelled and fewer women were referred to mental health services.

Postpartum women also face substantial personal and environmental **barriers to physical activity** and exercise participation, in addition to the barriers that already exist as women identified by This Girl Can, they face access to appropriate and affordable exercise facilities, sleep deprivation, post-natal mental health issues, post-partum physical complications, breastfeeding, lack of childcare and much more.

National Picture: According to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecology, up to



1 in 5 women develop mental health problems during pregnancy or in the first year after childbirth.

Only 7% of women with a mental health problem are referred to specialist care.

A new Sport England survey released in 2021 showed that **64% of pregnant women or women with children under one year have experienced nervousness or anxiety related to physical activity.** A survey showed 33% of midwives and health visitors, rarely or never spoke about or gave advice on getting active to pregnant women, with 27% rarely or never giving advice to new mums.

The **This Girl Can** activation team started to look into motherhood as one of a few new areas of focus – especially new mums (with children age 0-4) where habits are fluid/changing and where activity tends to decline and often never recover to pre-parenthood levels. There is a huge correlation between mum's activity levels and their children's plus post-natal depression has shot up over the last year.

In Cornwall

Almost 40% of adults in Cornwall are doing less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week and we know that levels of inactivity increase by 10% in areas of high deprivation. Active Pregnancy Foundation nationally has suggested that **only 3-15% of women** who are pregnant or post-partum are doing the recommended levels of physical activity. In 2021, 4059 babies were born in Cornwall: 1002 by Caesarean, 492 vaginal assisted and 2565 vaginal births. This means that **over 4,000 women, during this year, were likely to be doing less physical activity** that CMO guidelines recommends, contributing towards increased chances of developing pregnancy-related complications, depression and weight gain, leading to post-partum issues.



3-15%

women who are pregnant or post-partum are doing the recommended levels of physical activity.

OUR JOURNEY

Supporting New Families

How did we help?

This year we focused our work on supporting key partners that supported women living in areas of high deprivation, young mums (aged up to 24) and those most likely to be less active through the following channels:

Training: Our aim was to increase understanding for those working with new mums and new families on the importance of physical activity. As such we devised, promoted and delivered (or signposted to) a range of training. These professionals included the Together for Families Best Start in Life Practitioners, Healthy Cornwall Health Improvement Practitioners and Health Visitors. This training included:

- 1 hour webinar and online introductory course
- 3 hour virtual 'Importance of physical activity for new families'

"Best training I've been on in a while."

"Really good and interesting and lots to think about."

"Very informative"

"At first I thought we were just going to talk about exercise but now I realise how important physical activity is to everything and now I'm enthused to talk to families about how this can help them in so many ways and get started on our organised walks - I'm very excited."

"Great training"

Walking: The most accessible and appropriate form of physical activity for pregnant women and new mums (with low levels of physical activity) is walking. It also offers socialisation and motivation if done with other pregnant women or new mums. Many buggy walking groups exist but more could be available. So we started to co-ordinate and support organisations to increase

the number of buggy walks in Cornwall (informal or formally). This included:

- Working in partnership with four other Active Partnerships to bid for resources to support the National Childbirth Training (NCT) implementation of 'Walk and Talks' in Cornwall
- Collated website information on walking groups and walking support (visit: <https://www.activecornwall.org/sports-activities-and-play/walking>)
- Promoted the benefits of walking to healthcare professionals and those working with new mums to incorporate it into visits, or their conversations

The benefits of walking while pregnant: <https://youtu.be/3LU9T-gobfA>

Networking: Through building a new network of key partners, which included HealthWatch, WILD Young Parents and Homestart Kernow, physical activity has also been placed as a priority for the development of the antenatal education for Cornwall on behalf of the Local Maternity Partnership. A new pilot programme will be underway next year that focuses on using physical activity to support pregnant women's overall wellbeing and to impart important health messages at this key stage of life.

Digital Resources: We developed a range of new web pages on the new Active Cornwall website, that focused on supporting new families, which is a completely new area for us. Resources can be freely used by key partners in Cornwall.

Future Plans

We're hoping to focus our efforts next year on developing a wide range of This Mum Moves Ambassadors and Champions that can advocate for the value and importance of physical activity, as well as supporting communities with NCT walk and talks and resources that can be freely used by partners.

If you'd like to learn more, please contact **Samantha Lawrence** at samantha.lawrence@cornwall.gov.uk or visit our website: www.activecornwall.org/early-years-and-families/new-parents/