Now I Don’t Feel Alone: Supporting refugees and asylum seekers to thrive as parents

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Aims

This case study looks at the impacts of specialist NCT classes on the health and wellbeing outcomes of asylum seeking and refugee mothers in Leeds.

Methodology

- The short paper looks at the impact of specialist NCT classes for asylum seeking and refugee mothers;
- Information was gathered through conversations with key practitioners at the class, and supplemented by wider literature, including a recent NCT evaluation of the

postnatal sessions at Bankside School.

Key issues

This paper focuses on how practitioners have run specialist classes for asylum seeking and refugee mothers in Leeds, as well as the impact of these specialist classes have on the participants' maternal and mental health.

The paper outlines how the service is delivered. Practitioners and volunteers host weekly drop-in sessions for women during pregnancy, as well as postnatal sessions. These are held at Bankside Children's Centre (previously known at Choto Moni).

The antenatal service started in 2003, in partnership with SureStart, and served both refugee and asylum seeking mothers and other local models. The postnatal classes began in 2015, expanding the service to offer separate weekly sessions with funding from NHS Leeds North CCG. From 2016, the postnatal classes also included baby massage.

Class leaders explained that they developed a service which was "informal and relaxed", which allowed women to learn from other mothers, ask questions, and gain essential information on healthcare. An evaluation of the postnatal sessions in 2016 found that more than half who attended were refugees or asylum seekers (53%). Of the 18 mothers who gave feedback, all reported that they had benefited from the support they received and would recommend it to others.

Wider benefits included: opportunities for mothers to meet and bond with other mothers; improved knowledge and skills for parenting; confidence in parenting; improved feelings of wellbeing and overall confidence; improved knowledge and confidence to access a variety of services; improving language skills; and opportunities to become volunteers in the group.

Four mothers who benefited from the sessions have gone on to become volunteers in the group, providing support to new mothers and helping with interpreting.

Conclusion

Practitioners felt that the Bankside project created a safe space for women to come to, learn about maternal health, and be supported through pregnancy and after birth. Quotes from service users demonstrate an increase in confidence, sense of community, and release from the stresses of motherhood.

Web Link
https://www.nct.org.uk/sites/default/files/related_documents/WWP-Clayton_Bhavna...
Migrant Group
Refugees
Topic
Health
Health needs
Sexual health
Women
Place

Leeds
West Yorkshire
Year
2017
Resource Type
Journal article
Publisher
Perspective – NCT’s Journal on Preparing Parents for Birth and Early Parenthood
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Source URL: *https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/research-entry/now-i-dont-feel-alone-supporting-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-thrive-parents*