

Winners announced of £7.6 million fund to help give babies the best start in life

- New Health and Wellbeing Fund to focus on mothers living in black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) communities or deprived areas
- The 19 projects will help to promote nutrition, learning, language development and mental health during pregnancy and post-birth
- The fund will support the government's pledge to level up communities and reduce health inequalities

The winners of a new multi-million pound fund to reduce health inequalities among new mothers and babies have been announced.

The Health and Wellbeing Fund, based on the theme of 'starting well', will help charities run and expand projects to:

- boost mental health for new and expectant mothers
- improve the development of babies and children
- give people the best chance for a healthy start by preventing obesity and diabetes

Set up across the country from Cornwall to Lancashire, the 19 winning projects include a number of innovative schemes aimed at levelling up BAME groups and promoting healthy behaviours.

Public Health Minister, Jo Churchill said:

Everyone deserves to live a long, healthy life and the perfect time to start to achieve it is in the beginning. Vital support for improving mental health of mothers, nutrition of babies and the learning and development of children in early years will help ensure the best possible start by reducing the inequality that some face.

We have had some fantastic, innovative applications for the Health and Wellbeing Fund. I'm looking forward to seeing these winning projects in action, making real, tangible improvements to the lives and health of families.

The Health and Wellbeing Fund: Starting Well will see the 19 projects given a share of up to £7.6 million over 3 years to improve the lives of families in their local areas.

Some of the projects include:

- a scheme in Birmingham which will expand an existing parental engagement

programme to reach parents earlier – the project will support the earlier identification of children who need language support before the age of 2 through building the knowledge and confidence in early years’ practitioners and professionals, as well as their parents

- a project in Croydon which will support survivors of trafficking and asylum seekers by tailoring intensive support to meet mothers’ needs – it will include weekly emotional support from trained perinatal peer support volunteers and qualified doulas as birth companions for the most vulnerable
- scheme in Leicester which will provide a joined-up care pathway for all families with a focus on BAME communities, giving children the best start in life by complementing existing statutory provision – the service will expand the reach of breastfeeding antenatal support, with a focus on younger women and those who do not speak English

The Health and Wellbeing Fund is already supporting 23 social prescribing schemes and 23 children and young people’s mental health schemes that are providing important services to communities across England.

It is a part of the Health and Wellbeing Programme, a joint initiative by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI).

The Health and Wellbeing Fund is run by the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance.

Projects will be funded over 3 years, up to a ceiling of £7.65 million. The funding amounts after the first year are to be agreed each year subject to the next Spending Review.

The Health and Wellbeing Fund is an integral element of the Health and Wellbeing Programme, part of a programme of government investment in the voluntary sector. The programme is run in a partnership between DHSC, NHSEI and PHE.

The Health and Wellbeing Alliance is a key element of the Health and Wellbeing Programme, the aim of which is to promote health equalities and reduce health inequalities across the country.

Successful projects

1. Hestia Housing and Support

Location: London Borough of Croydon

The project will expand Happy Baby Community’s community-based model of perinatal support to highly disadvantaged pregnant women who have suffered multiple traumas in partnership with Hestia. The project will support survivors of trafficking and asylum seekers by tailoring intensive support to meet mother’s needs. Delivery will include weekly emotional support from trained perinatal peer support volunteers and qualified doulas as birth companions for the most vulnerable.

2. St Michael's Fellowship

Location: Lambeth, London

The project will expand the holistic support offer to expectant and young parents by focusing on supporting fathers. The service involves highly bespoke one-to-one support and group work covering child development, family wellbeing, moves to work readiness and healthy relationships. The Caring Dads group supports fathers to see their importance in their children's lives, encouraging their commitment to their children will begin to include expectant father and very young fathers. Content development for digital app supporting families will include short videos designed for fathers. The project is expected to support 40% Black Caribbean, Black British or Black African fathers.

3. National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

Location: Newham, London

NCT's current perinatal peer support programme in Newham is a strengths-based, early intervention approach to helping expectant and new mothers (up to 2 years post-birth) who are socially isolated, experience mental health difficulties, and struggle to access services. Both one-to-one and group support is delivered by trained volunteers with lived experience. The service will expand to further embed and enhance our offer, with a particular focus on reaching more BAME women.

4. National Literacy Trust

Location: Birmingham

In partnership Birmingham Forward Steps the project will expand an existing parental engagement programme to reach parents earlier, when their child is one. The project will support the earlier identification of children who need language support before the age of 2 through building the knowledge and confidence in early years' practitioners and professionals – all while developing the skills and confidence of their parents/carers, enabling them to consistently support their child's speech, language and communication

5. Spurgeons

Location: Birmingham

In partnership with Birmingham Forward Steps the projects aims to improve the perinatal health and mental health of Pakistani mothers. This project will provide specific and dedicated resource to engage directly with the Pakistani community and increase engagement with support services. The project will recruit volunteers from within the Pakistani community who will receive training to offer befriending and information, advice and guidance to those within their communities.

Location: Birmingham, Midlands

The project will deliver an empowering health coaching provision that sustains lifestyle changes and health benefits for BAME mothers and their children (2.5 years) at risk of developing chronic disease and obesity. Integrated with GP services, the project will support families on nutrition, prevention and managing type 2 diabetes.

Location: West Midlands

The service will expand by recruiting and training 11 part-time Community Connectors (CC) who will be located at partner sites to maximise access to high deprived and BAME communities. CC will increase the skills and capacity of support within the diverse communities' sensitive to the cultural needs. CC will build trust in the community to engage expectant mothers early and support them to register with maternity services.

8. Centre for Fun and Families Ltd

Location: Leicester

The project aims for a joined-up care pathway for all families with a focus of BAME, giving children the best start in life by complementing existing statutory provision. The service will expand the reach of breastfeeding antenatal with a focus on younger women and those not speaking English, workshops such as weaning/healthy eating family and existing antenatal education programmes.

9. PSS (UK) Ltd (and Everton in the Community)

Location: Liverpool

The currently project provides early intervention therapeutic service which works to strengthen bonds and interdependencies within families. It will expand to reach families who live complex lives and are in earlier need of support. In partnership with Everton in the Community the project will offer a specialised and targeted 'father's' element

10. Koala North West

Location: Wirral

The current services will expand to targets Wirral's five most deprived wards and provided tailored practical and emotional support that improves wellbeing, reduces isolation and supports both children and caregivers to thrive. New support groups such as an antenatal Breastfeeding Peer Support will be created, and additional Perinatal volunteers recruited to support families.

11. Home-Start Manchester

Location: Manchester

The current parent-infant mental health (PIMHS) service provides consistent, whole-family approach which improves the way families of 0-2 year-olds are

supported through pregnancy and early childhood. The expansion aims to address and overcome three barriers (Language, Culture and Digital exclusion) to support for the most disadvantaged families and BAME in our communities.

12. Lancashire Women

Location: Lancashire

The current service provides therapy to support parents who have babies admitted to a neonatal intensive care Unit (NICU) or have experienced the loss of a child. The service will expand to support families in Preston and Blackpool NICU and fetal medicine clinics at Burnley, Preston and Blackpool hospitals.

13. Bevan Healthcare CIC

Location: Bradford

The project will expand, and strengthen the preconception care focus of our inclusive health programme for highly vulnerable women in Bradford. It will deliver an inclusive health approach to preconception care reflecting both the crucial role this plays in successful pregnancy and children's lifelong health and the identified needs, experiences and life circumstances of the target communities.

Location: Kirklees

Thriving Kirklees is a VCSE-led partnership delivering vital front-line family health and support services. The service will expand by a new working model within BAME and similarly excluded communities and integrates home-based support services, engages local people in planning, and significantly increases take-up and involvement.

15. Family Action

Location: Stockton

The current service is perinatal peer support (PPS), which provides early intervention and prevention for those diagnosed with, or at risk of, low to medium-level mental health issues including anxiety and depression. The service will expand to include one-to-one, tailored support from perinatal coordinators, therapeutic play groups and digital coaching

16. Trelya

Location: Cornwall

The current service 'Skylar' is a community-centred, whole-family provision which takes a '360-degree holistic approach' considering and working within all areas of each child's life. The project will expand to include a specialist provision for children and families from pregnancy to 2.5 years, the number of families and children from pregnancy to 2.5 years who access Skylar.

17. Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and South Lincolnshire Mind Ltd

Location: Peterborough

The expansion project focuses on coproducing and designing current perinatal mental health service, support groups and courses to engage with Muslim women. It will include improving relevancy and cultural appeal to Muslim women and include faith-based content, culturally sensitive language, and will be co-produced with facilitators from the Muslim community.

18. Splitz Support Service

Location: Wiltshire, South West England

The project aims to improve community knowledge, access to and engagement with pre-conception, perinatal, domestic abuse and other specialist services for targeted communities. The service employs BAME community development workers aimed at increasing the number of BAME being referred and supported to domestic abuse and family interventions and improving services to meet the health and social care needs of individuals and groups.

It delivers dedicated community-based individual and group programmes targeted at vulnerable young women (principally care leavers) at risk from abusive relationships, unwanted pregnancies and self-harm/suicide.

19. Early Years Alliance

Location: Luton

The project will expand the 'Flying Start' antenatal and post-natal pathway to enhance service delivery to increase engagement from BAME communities and areas of highest deprivation. A single point of access into the service will simplify the process for parents to access support at the right time.