AIMS For a better birth...

Highlighting the time volunteers give to research projects and what we feel we contribute.

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By the AIMS Campaigns Team

How AIMS contributes as a Patient and Public Involvement partner

In addition to our own campaigning work, AIMS is often invited to act as a PPI (patient and public involvement partner) for external research and other projects. We feel that this is a tribute to our reputation as an informed and constructive lay voice in the maternity services improvement debate. In this article we outline some of the projects that our Campaigns Volunteers have contributed to recently. We are grateful to our Campaigns Team Volunteers who have given their time, knowledge and expertise to this important work.

The Renfrew Report

Enabling Safe Quality Midwifery Services and Care In Northern Ireland

In May 2023, Professor Mary Renfrew was commissioned by the Department of Health Northern Ireland to conduct an independent review of Maternity Services in Northern Ireland. Her report "Enabling Safe Quality Midwifery Services and Care in Northern Ireland" was published in October 2024.

AIMS volunteers attended a parliamentary event in May 2023 to discuss the current provision of maternity services in Northern Ireland and the need for a new Maternity Strategy. One of our volunteers also met with Professor Mary Renfrew online on 29th September to discuss how AIMS can best support this work and also highlight AIMS position papers on Choice of Birthplace, Continuity of Carer and Physiology-Informed Maternity Services. Following publication of the report, AIMS volunteers took part in a 'Transforming Maternity Services Engagement Event' in December 2024.

Timing: May 2023 - December 2024

Volunteer time given: 10 hours

The Birth Experience Study - UK (BESt -UK)

The Birth Experience Study - UK (BESt -UK) | King's College London

This study being run by a team at King's College, London is the UK arm of an international investigation,

originally developed in Australia. It aimed to explore, by means of a co-produced survey of maternity service users:

- The factors that contribute to a good or bad birth experience.
- The prevalence of birth trauma and obstetric violence.
- How different models of care impact women and birthing people's childbirth experiences

AIMS provided input on adapting the survey to make it appropriate for a UK audience. We also suggested ways to make the language more accessible to maternity service users.

Timing: February/March 2024

Volunteer time given: 3 hours

CHERISH project

The Cherish Project | City St George's, University of London

CHERISH is a programme development project by the Centre for Maternal and Child Health Research at City St Georges University. Its purpose was to carry out "the early work needed to co-design a personalised support package to improve outcomes for women and birthing people aiming for a spontaneous labour and birth."

As members of the Stakeholder Advisory Network, AIMS provided feedback on the research team's proposals for phase 2 of the project. We also participated in aWorld Cafe event to identify what research would have the most impact for those aiming for spontaneous physiological labour, birth and recovery, and how this might effectively be co-designed.

Timing: January - July 2024

Volunteer time given: 8 hours



The RCM Research Prioritisation Project

Research Prioritisation Project - Royal College of Midwives

The aims of this project, run by the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), were to "discover the gaps in evidence across all areas of midwifery practice and maternity care and identify a top 10 research priorities will be championed by the RCM and other organisations to influence funders and policy makers."

With a volunteer on the Steering Group, and as Project Partners, AIMS played a significant role in shaping the project, working with a range of other stakeholders, the RCM team and the James Lind Alliance. Our work included agreeing a scope that we felt was workable, while including the aspects of maternity and midwifery care that affect service users. We helped design two surveys, the first to identify and the second to prioritise unanswered questions; we also helped to promote engagement with these through our Journal, newsletters and social media. A key activity was reviewing the potential research questions to ensure that these reflected accurately the responses to the first survey. Finally we helped to shortlist the questions for the prioritisation workshop, based on the responses to the second survey.

You can read more about the project in these AIMS Journal articles:

Influencing the future of midwifery and maternity research | AIMS

Working together to influence the future of midwifery research | AIMS

Timing: July 2023 - April 2025

Volunteer time given: 26 hours

Plan-A

This project, led by the University of Aberdeen, is developing adecision aid to support pregnant women to choose between planning vaginal or caesarean birth during antenatal discussions with health professionals.

As a PPI partner AIMS has provided detailed comments on the development of the decision aid, on infographic and associated videos from a user perspective, informed by our in-depth understanding of the research around vaginal and caesarean birth. We also assisted with the planning of workshops to gain feedback on the prototype decision aid from maternity service users, midwives and obstetricians.

Timing: April 2024 - present

Volunteer time given: 41 hours to date

Change NHS consultation

November 2024 - February 2025

Change NHS was the Government's consultation on ideas to inform the new 10-year plan for the NHS. AIMS participated in two ways. Firstly, a group of volunteers brainstormed ideas about what key improvements to the maternity services we would want included in the new 10-year Health Plan. These were complied into an organisational submission AIMS suggestions for the maternity services in the Government's 10-year Health Plan | AIMS.

Secondly, we organised a Community Engagement workshop which was attended by a mix of midwives or former midwives, birth workers, birth activists and representatives of charities in the maternity sector. This is the output from the workshop that we submitted Change NHS Community Engagement workshop feedback | AIMS

Timing: November 2024 - February 2025

Volunteer time given: 20 hours

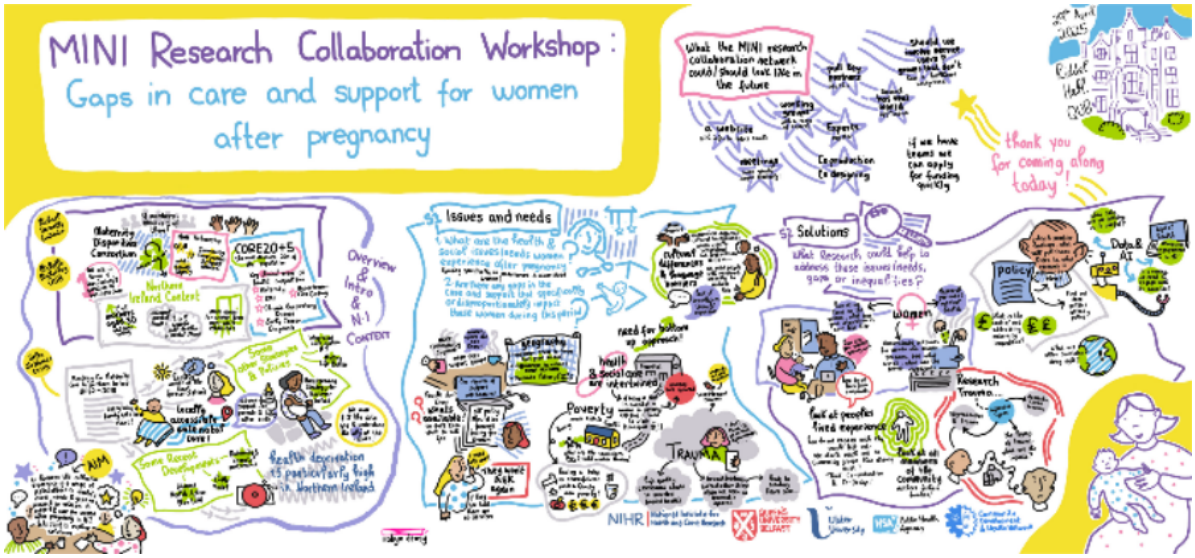
NIHR Challenge Maternity Disparities Consortium

NIHR Challenge: Maternity Disparities Consortium | NIHR

The NIHR (National Institute for Health and Care Research) Challenge Maternity Disparities Consortium aims to bring together "a diverse range of organisations with expertise in research, capacity building and working with people and communities to deliver a step change in maternity outcomes and developing future research leaders in this area of need. The research carried out by the consortium will focus on inequalities before, during and after pregnancy."

AIMS volunteers were consulted by two of the nine member collaborations - Maternity Inequalities Northern Ireland (MINI) (Queen's University Belfast collaborating with Ulster University, Public Health Agency and the Community Development Health Network) and i6[1] (University of Aberdeen collaborating with Cardiff University) - to help shape the final themes and cross-cutting workstreams that the consortium will work on for the next five years.

AIMS volunteers in Northern Ireland participated in both the Maternity Inequalities Northern Ireland research collaboration' (MINI) kick-off event to address maternal disparities, and also a workshop focussed on gaps in care and support for women in the immediate and extended period after pregnancy.





The Aberdeen group invited AIMS volunteers to share their experiences of how NHS Maternity care affects women, and to give our thoughts on how this could be improved, with a particular focus on what is important for reducing inequalities in future. We also discussed with them how best to engage women in research, and we gave feedback on the ranking of a long-list of 20 potential research themes.

Timing: January - May 2025

Volunteer time given: 14 hours

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1 Editor's note: The i6, in this context, refers to a research initiative dedicated to fostering research to improve maternity service provision and led by Dr Mairead Black at the University of Aberdeen.