

Equalities Impact Assessment



Background

This assessment was prepared according to guidance on the UK government website and considers all relevant protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010).¹

¹ See GOV.UK 'Equality: Guidance and Regulation' (<https://www.gov.uk/society-and-culture/equality>).

The following data was utilised:

- ❖ Mothers for Mothers' client survey data for 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25
- ❖ Feedback and case studies from clients for 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25
- ❖ Client demographic data for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25
- ❖ Feedback from volunteers for 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25
- ❖ Feedback from staff and trustees for 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25
- ❖ IMD data for neighbourhoods where client residences in 2023/24 and 2024/25
- ❖ SEND vignettes and overview of Albanian mothers' group: 2024/25
- ❖ Summary of staff and trustee equity, diversity and inclusion survey data (2024)
- ❖ Client Charter
- ❖ Action Against Racism Charter
- ❖ Equity, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy (2024)
- ❖ Anti-Racism Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference (2024)
- ❖ Anti-Racism Task and Finish Group Minutes for May and June 2024
- ❖ Inclusivity feedback from staff member (2025)
- ❖ Reflective conversation with CEO Maria Viner over Microsoft Teams (2025).

Assessment

<i>Protected characteristic</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
Race	Positive impact. Mothers for Mothers provides support that is culturally competent and accessible to women for whom English is not their first language. This facilitates access to Mothers for Mothers' services as well as enabling mothers to access and navigate both statutory and VCSE services across BNSSG.	<p>In 2024/25, 21% of Mothers for Mothers' clients told us they were from a black or minority ethnic background (7% did not disclose their ethnicity). This is a similar proportion to the previous few years and significantly higher than across the local population: equivalent data for BNSSG in 2022 was 7% in South Gloucestershire, 3% in North Somerset, and 14% in Bristol city.²</p> <p>Poor experiences of healthcare are more likely to be reported by minority ethnic groups, as reflected in the findings reported by MBRRACE-UK (2024).³ A Maternity Health Equity Audit across BNSSG (2022) showed that Black women had the poorest outcomes across all areas, including higher rates of prematurity, low birth weight, and neonatal intensive care admissions.⁴</p> <p>Mothers for Mothers develops and maintains cultural competency and an anti-racist ethos via its Action Against Racism Charter, Equity, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy, and an Anti-Racism Task Force which meets regularly.</p> <p>Mothers for Mothers' services are staffed by women from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds including Indian, Mixed British Caribbean, British East African, Black African, and White Welsh.</p> <p>One member of staff on the Reach helpline speaks fluent Hindi, Bengali and Gujarati which removes some language barriers for South Asian women. There is a dedicated helpline session for these languages every week on a Thursday afternoon, and a social media tile in these languages with voiceover.</p>

² Healthier Together BNSSG, Our Future Health, September 2022.

³ MBRRACE-UK Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care annual report, October 2024 (<https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrance-uk/reports/maternal-reports>).

⁴ Healthier Together BNSSG, Our Future Health, September 2022.

		<p>Mothers for Mothers has established a collaborative working relationship with Black Mothers Matter, recognising the importance of supporting Black-led organisations rather than speaking for them or over them.</p> <p>In 2024/25, Mothers for Mothers launched a peer-led Albanian mothers' group, supporting women with information about issues such as special needs awareness, maternal mental health and toddler sleep patterns in a culturally relevant way. Over the year, 32 women attended 12 sessions. The group have been taking English classes online as well as Albanian heritage dance classes.</p> <p><i>"Now I am volunteering at the Albanian group. I am doing something which is close to my heart. Helping and supporting other Albanian mums who are struggling is bringing meaning to my life."</i></p> <p><i>"Especially as a black mother, there wasn't a lot for mental health information and how to navigate using services. There might have been a perception that Mothers for Mothers may not understand a woman of colour, but during my support I felt represented."</i></p> <p><i>"Mothers for Mothers were alive to the fact that ethnic minority mothers are at a disadvantage in pregnancy, labour and beyond, and raised it as an issue of equality. I was signposted to research on this... MfM were aware and alive to this issue which is incredibly important. Because of these conversations I have reached out to other women of colour and found similar experiences. I wonder about the statistics and the collective experiences - I feel that this could be fed back to the trusts from the safe spaces created by Mothers for Mothers, where women feel able to talk honestly about their experiences."</i></p> <p><i>"It's a lot for me to process and, being black, I have to fight for [my daughter] to have equal rights as her white counterparts. It's draining and she has so much potential...."</i></p>
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		<i>Thank you for listening. I really appreciate your support."</i>
Marriage or civil partnership	Positive impact. A high proportion of clients are single mothers, for whom the challenges of parenting are magnified. These women particularly need the accessibility and flexibility that Mothers for Mothers offers.	57% of clients in 2024/25 told us that they were single or separated from their partners, a proportion maintained from the previous year. Equivalent data for the local population in BNSSG is not available and national figures for 2024 have yet to be published, but nationally in 2023, only 16% of families were lone-parent families. ⁵
Disability	Positive impact. Not only does poor mental health in itself often constitute disability, but Mothers for Mothers also provides specialist SEND support. This service self-empowers mothers of children with additional needs, or who are neurodivergent themselves, to parent confidently and effectively, and to access and navigate other relevant services.	<p>16% of clients in 2024/25 told us that they had a disability in addition to their mental health needs (6% did not disclose). This is a similar proportion to the previous few years. In 2023/24, 44% of the staff team identified as having a disability.</p> <p>Mothers for Mothers is a member of Bristol City Council's Community of Groups, feeding into the Bristol City Council SEND Partnership, and represents parents and carers on Bristol City Council's Inclusion in Education Group, which also feeds into the SEND Partnership.</p> <p>In 2024/25, 87% of clients surveyed about SEND support felt better able to access other services regarding the needs of their SEND child (up 17% from the previous year).</p> <p><i>"[The most helpful thing the SEND support worker did was] she helped me complete a need assessment form, which I found overwhelming due to my needs."</i></p> <p><i>"[The client] felt the school wasn't being adaptive to her daughter's needs and her daughter was perceiving the teacher's actions as not liking her. [The SEND support worker] initiated a school meeting between senior leadership, [the client] and [The SEND support worker]. [The client] was able to lead the meeting and confidently share her</i></p>

⁵ Office for National Statistics: Families and Households in the UK: 2023

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2023>).

		<p>concerns and thoughts. The school was able to see things through the lens of the young black child and agreed they would change this in respect to support."</p> <p>"I have a debilitating disability; practical support was what I needed as well as emotional support. My home visitor was an all-rounder with support."</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Positive impact. Mothers for Mothers has significant expertise in the specific access and support needs of mothers, and the unique challenges that they face. We have been supporting mothers locally for over 40 years, and our staff and volunteers are all mothers with first-hand lived experience of perinatal illness.</p>	<p>In Bristol alone, an estimated 500-800 women per year develop mild to moderate depression and/or anxiety in the perinatal period, while approximately 10-15 will develop serious perinatal mental illness.⁶</p> <p>"Being able to have home visits was really important for me to build my confidence and work up to leaving the house with the baby."</p> <p>"The phone calls really helped as I could access them anywhere and didn't have to commit to being in a certain place with a new baby."</p> <p>"Compared to my other experiences of mental health support, this was tailored to my specific needs."</p> <p>"It is essential that you exist. The knowledge GPs and health visitors have around maternal mental health is not there. You need a specialised service to deliver which is what Mothers for Mothers is doing."</p>
Religion or belief	<p>Positive impact. Working effectively with mothers from faith communities is a key aspect of Mothers for Mothers' cultural competence. Mothers for Mothers fosters strong local community links and helps mothers to connect with faith-based support.</p>	<p>In 2024/25, clients belonged to a range of faiths including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and Sikhism.</p> <p>"I have felt strong enough to contact some support agencies that specifically help Muslim women, and I have reached out to an imam outside of Bristol to come and advocate on my behalf."</p> <p>Case study excerpt: Her religion has provided the client with much solace, and she was furthering her knowledge and understanding of its teachings... Subjects of discussion included the effect of our</p>

⁶ BNSSG Integrated Care Board and Bristol City Council, Bristol JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2022/23.

		hormones and monthly cycle on mental health with a consideration of practical alternatives to prayer during menstruation (yoga, mindfulness etc).
Sexual orientation	<p>Positive impact. LGBTQIA+ parents face unique challenges and discrimination in maternity and early years settings. Compared to the proportion of parents nationally who are LGBTQIA+, an unusually high proportion of Mothers for Mothers' clients identify in this way. This suggests that LGBTQIA+ mothers feel welcome and safe with us.</p>	<p>6.1% of clients in 2024/25 told us that they identified as LGBTQIA+ (26% did not disclose), a similar proportion to the previous few years.</p> <p>While data on sexual minority families in BNSSG is limited, nationally in the 2021 census only 3.2% of people identified in this way. This indicates that the proportion of parents is lower, perhaps significantly so as LGBTQIA+ people are less likely to become parents than their heterosexual peers.⁷</p> <p><i>"I believe all the staff and volunteers at Mothers for Mothers are caring and supportive of all people who may use our services. This includes members of the LGBTQ+ community and parents who may not consider themselves 'Mothers' but would still benefit from the peer support we offer."</i></p>
Sex or gender	<p>Positive impact. Mothers for Mothers provides tailored specialist services and has significant expertise in the specific access and support needs of mothers and birthing people, and the unique challenges that they face.</p>	<p>Mothers for Mothers caters exclusively to mothers and birthing people affected by perinatal mental health difficulties. Partners, carers and supporters may call the helpline if they are seeking support on a mother's behalf. This is reflected in the fact that, across our services, only 2.4% of clients in 2024/25 were male.</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>Positive impact. Gender diverse parents face unique challenges and discrimination in maternity and early years settings. Since only a small minority of people</p>	<p>Among Mothers for Mothers' clients in 2024/25, 1.8% identified as neither male nor female and 0.2% stated that their gender identity was not the same as the sex registered at their birth (23% did not disclose).</p> <p>While data on gender diverse families in BNSSG is limited, nationally in the 2021</p>

⁷ Office for National Statistics: Sexual Orientation, England and Wales: Census 2021 (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality>).

	<p>are transgender or gender diverse, and even fewer are also parents, the fact that gender diverse parents are represented among Mothers for Mothers clients suggests a welcoming and safe environment for them.</p>	<p>census 0.5% of people stated that their gender identity was not the same as the sex registered at birth (6% did not disclose). This indicates that the proportion of parents is lower, as transgender and gender diverse people are less likely to become parents than their cisgender peers.⁸</p> <p>Mothers for Mothers have an openly non-binary member of staff working directly with parents. They wrote, <i>"I believe all the staff and volunteers at Mothers for Mothers are caring and supportive of all people who may use our services. This includes members of the LGBTQ+ community and parents who may not consider themselves 'Mothers' but would still benefit from the peer support we offer."</i></p> <p>Mothers for Mothers has contributed to an open letter from the women's sector in Bristol, expressing solidarity with all women and gender diverse people and resisting any attempt to pit marginalised groups against one another.</p>
Age	<p>Positive impact. A high proportion of Mothers for Mothers' clients are young mothers, for whom the challenges of parenting are magnified. They particularly need the accessibility that Mothers for Mothers offers.</p> <p>Mothers for Mothers also improves outcomes for babies and children by fostering maternal</p>	<p>7.2% of clients in 2024/25 were young people under the age of 25, a similar proportion to the previous few years.</p> <p>While data on maternal age within BNSSG is limited, nationally the average of a first-time mother in 2023 was 30.9.⁹</p> <p>Untreated and ongoing perinatal mental health issues have been shown to adversely affect child health outcomes, an impact lasting into adulthood.¹⁰</p> <p><i>"There's being a regular mum and then there's being a young mum and being a young mum means you don't get many, or any, other mum friends. It's actually so overwhelming and I felt really judged by other people for my decisions... This is why I decided to reach out to Mothers for</i></p>

⁸ Office for National Statistics: Gender Identity, England and Wales: Census 2021

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/genderidentity>)

⁹ Office for National Statistics: Births in England and Wales: 2023

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2023>)

¹⁰ BNSSG Integrated Care Board and Bristol City Council, Bristol JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2022/23.

	<p>attachment, and by supporting mothers to engage with health services, pre-schools, and schools on their children's behalf.</p>	<p><i>Mothers...The support that I have had so far from Mothers for Mothers is definitely what I needed."</i></p> <p><i>"Getting better made me realise how much my child needs me and I've been able to put her needs first."</i></p> <p><i>"I have seen a huge shift in my youngest son's confidence. He is comfortable being at group and having my home visitor around, I can see his confidence growing every week. If I had known about a service like Mothers for Mothers when my other children were younger, then it would have been really useful."</i></p> <p><i>"Mothers for Mothers have also helped me access more support for my children in school and they have helped me to navigate referrals for them too..."</i></p>
Other - deprivation	<p>Positive impact. Mothers for Mothers provides practical as well as emotional support to mothers facing multiple disadvantages, including poverty, homelessness, domestic abuse, refugee or migrant status and victims of trafficking. Mothers for Mothers also helps these women to engage with relevant statutory and other services to improve quality of life for them and their children.</p>	<p>Within BNSSG, there is considerable local variation in socio-economic wellbeing, with significant areas of deprivation.</p> <p>In 2024/25, 17,200 children (21%) in Bristol were living in income-deprived households. 15% of Bristol's population were living in the most deprived 10% of areas in England in 2019 (16% in 2015).¹¹</p> <p>Mothers for Mothers is based in an area of Bristol which has been ranked as the 91st most deprived neighbourhood nationally in 2024/25, compared to 67th most deprived in 2015.</p> <p>In 2024/25, 56% of clients resided in an area with an Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score of 5 or below, while 13% were in an area with an IMD score of 1. These figures are similar to the previous few years.</p> <p>Mothers with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), those living in poverty, and those experiencing domestic violence</p>

¹¹ BNSSG Integrated Care Board and Bristol City Council, Bristol JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2024/25.

		<p>and migration, are all at increased risk of perinatal mental ill-health.¹²</p> <p><i>"I was dealing with two children, with one on the way. There was a lot going on with my physical health and mental health. I was trying to manage the kids in a flat and was worried about their mental health. I was also experiencing racial abuse."</i></p> <p><i>"I was dealing with so much, fleeing abuse, living somewhere I didn't know with people I didn't know, with no support and I felt very isolated. I had no one to help or defend me, no one to advocate for me, given me and my child were in such vulnerable circumstances."</i></p> <p><i>"My home visitor has also written to my MP with a supporting statement to help us to secure a new house. This week, I viewed and accepted our forever house. She has also helped me fill in forms and has taken me food shopping for me and my family. This really helped us out."</i></p> <p><i>"[My peer supporter] has made it easy for me to access other help I need, eg. counselling, and also signposting to Gingerbread and Home-Start."</i></p> <p>Case study excerpt: We supported the client with her application for temporary accommodation through the Council and with her partner's status as a refugee (this was successful, and they moved), we referred the client to Womankind for therapy, referred the family to Incredible Kids (SEND support for her child), benefits were brought up to date (backdated money received, items from baby bank, sofa project etc were sourced). We then supported the family to get onto 'Home Choice' and to start bidding (antisocial issues - drug use, prostitution, etc - in and around the street where they were housed were an ongoing problem for the family and they needed to move). Supporting letters from Health Visitor, GP and school to help push up the</p>
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¹² Public Health England, Mental Health and Wellbeing: JSNA Toolkit, 2019
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-mental-health-jsna-toolkit/4-perinatal-mental-health>).

		<p>process were collected. We also managed to arrange a holiday through the Family Holiday Association.</p> <p>Case study: Before working with us, the client was living in a supported bedsit in Bristol with her daughter after she was trafficked to the UK. She was awaiting confirmation from the Home Office of her status as a refugee/asylum seeker and as a victim of sex trafficking... During lockdown and beyond we were able to access Baby Bank and foodbanks for her. We were also able to provide Christmas presents through the Salvation Army. We were able to support her to access help from her solicitor and bank when her anxieties and financial concerns increased... At the end of our work together, the client was granted leave to remain from the Home Office following their agreement that she had been a victim of trafficking and that she should receive asylum in the UK.</p>
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Conclusion

The impact of Mothers for Mothers on minoritised and disadvantaged women and birthing people across BNSSG is significant. Over nearly 45 years of supporting local mothers, Mothers for Mothers has developed singular expertise not only in the specific access needs of women and birthing people suffering perinatal mental illness, but also in supporting those from racialised and faith communities and those who face multiple intersecting disadvantages. It is unlikely that any other offer would be able to replace any of Mothers for Mothers' services effectively, at least not without taking years to become established and a detrimental impact on mothers occurring in the meantime.

Dr Laura Richmond
June 2025