



# Moving Mums Initiative

## Executive Summary

*Prepared by Dr Marlize De Vivo*

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## BACKGROUND

The Moving Mums Initiative is a collaborative project involving Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (STH), the Active Pregnancy Foundation (APF), Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), Yorkshire Sport Foundation (YSF), and the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine (NCSEM).

Targeting communities with significant health inequalities – Burngreave, Parson Cross, and Darnall – the initiative focused on using physical activity as a vehicle to improve maternal and infant health outcomes. This aligns with STH's overarching mission to reduce health disparities and improve outcomes through preventative healthcare measures, as well as APF's goal of removing barriers to physical activity during the childbearing years.

The Moving Mums Initiative aimed to lay the foundations for promoting physical activity in Sheffield, initially focusing on healthy women with uncomplicated pregnancies. The project included three core delivery elements: scoping, upskilling, and embedding of resources. These components were designed to enhance understanding of the local context and to support future initiatives that promote physical activity among women.

## SCOPING

The 'Scoping' phase of the initiative was essential for understanding and addressing the needs of pregnant and postnatal women in the target communities. A qualitative study using a Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) approach gathered insights from local women, allowing them to voice their experiences and challenges related to physical activity engagement during and after pregnancy.

Findings revealed several significant barriers, including inadequate guidance from healthcare professionals, cultural and social constraints, and a lack of awareness regarding local opportunities. Many women reported feeling unsupported in their efforts to remain active and expressed a desire for improved communication about available resources. They identified the need for targeted materials, such as informational leaflets, and suggested utilising technology, such as text messages or mobile apps, to provide reminders and information, ideally facilitated by trusted healthcare providers or community organisations.

These insights are elaborated in the report titled "**Moving Mums Initiative: Tailoring Physical Activity for Sheffield's Diverse Maternal Communities.**" The report offers several key recommendations, such as improving the consistency and cultural sensitivity of guidance from healthcare professionals, developing programmes tailored to the diverse needs of Sheffield's communities, and increasing access to affordable and flexible physical activity opportunities. It also highlights the importance of leveraging technology to facilitate

engagement and enhancing local facilities to promote safe and supportive environments.

Alongside the PPI study, the initiative mapped available physical activities for pregnant and postnatal women in the target areas, resulting in "**The Moving Mums Initiative: Activity Brochure for Sheffield.**" This booklet outlines various activities, including walking groups, outdoor classes, gym-based sessions, and mother-and-baby classes, aiming to raise awareness and improve access to physical activity opportunities.

By identifying the barriers and enablers, the 'Scoping' phase provides essential insights to inform future action. This understanding lays the groundwork for potential collaborations, guiding efforts to effectively promote physical activity among women in Sheffield.

## UPSKILLING

The 'Upskilling' phase of the Moving Mums Initiative aimed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and confidence of professionals working with pregnant and postnatal women in Burngreave, Parson Cross, and Darnall. This phase consisted of two key training programmes:

### 1 This Mum Moves:

A total of 29 multidisciplinary professionals (including six from STH) were trained as This Mum Moves Ambassadors, with training delivered by the **Institute of Health Visiting** in collaboration with the APF. This programme significantly increased participants' knowledge, skills, and confidence in promoting physical activity to women during their childbearing years, as detailed in the report "**This Mum Moves Ambassador Training - Sheffield Moving Mums Initiative 2024.**" Evaluation data demonstrates marked improvement in understanding the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines for physical activity during and after pregnancy. Participants reported feeling more confident in providing advice, addressing safety concerns, and initiating conversations about physical activity.

Due to high demand, a waiting list has been established to facilitate future commissioning of this educational programme in Sheffield, ensuring that more professionals can benefit from this training.

It is important to highlight that challenges arose in releasing professionals to attend the workshops. Many women expressed a strong desire for physical activity advice and guidance from their healthcare professionals, which is currently lacking. To effectively facilitate the shift from 'treatment' to 'prevention', healthcare providers must fully recognise the value of physical activity as a powerful preventative tool for reducing major pregnancy complications. Research has shown that engaging in regular physical activity can lead to a 40–67% decrease in the risk of developing depression, pre-eclampsia, and gestational diabetes, all without increasing the likelihood of adverse pregnancy outcomes such as miscarriage, preterm delivery, or having a baby who is small for gestational age.

## 2 Level 3 Pre and Postnatal Exercise Instructor Qualification:

Twelve professionals were trained to become qualified Level 3 Pre- and Postnatal Exercise Instructors through **Core Fitness Education**. This training aimed to equip professionals with the skills to design and deliver exercise programmes tailored to the needs of pregnant and postnatal women.

Although there was strong interest in this opportunity, not all applicants met the initial entry criteria, which included a Level 2 fitness qualification. An additional £2k was secured from YSF to fund the training of three Level 2 fitness instructors, enabling them to meet the criteria for Level 3 certification.

Through delivering this upskilling element, it became evident that the Level 3 qualification primarily focuses on gym-based instruction. However, women have expressed a desire for a wider range of physical activities, highlighting the need for the fitness industry to respond with qualifications that prepare instructors to adapt various activities for pregnant and postnatal women beyond traditional gym settings.

## EMBEDDING RESOURCES

The 'Embedding Resources' phase aimed to enhance the availability and visibility of physical activity resources for pregnant and postnatal women in Sheffield, particularly at the **Jessop Wing**, where maternity care is delivered. With approximately 6,000 deliveries each year, this location serves as a vital touchpoint for reaching women.

A central element of this initiative was the This Mum Moves Ambassador educational programme, which provided ambassadors with access to a comprehensive digital toolkit comprising resources to support conversations and signposting. Selected materials from this toolkit were shared with STH for hosting on the Jessop Wing website, ensuring women can easily access relevant information about physical activity.

To address some of the barriers identified during the 'Scoping' phase, various printed materials, including banners, posters, leaflets, and booklets, are also being deployed at the Jessop Wing. This effort aims to increase awareness of local physical activity opportunities and serve as nudges to start conversations with healthcare professionals.

In conjunction with the mapping of local activities, providers have been supported in listing their programmes on the **Sheffield Directory**, making it easier for women to find relevant activities. Additionally, funding from the initiative has facilitated community activities, such as assisting local providers with room rentals for hosting exercise classes.

To conclude the project, and encourage collaboration and shared learning among stakeholders, an end-of-project networking event is scheduled for 21st November 2024. This event will bring together project partners, professionals, providers, and community members to share experiences and insights.



## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Moving Mums Initiative has underscored the vital role that targeted interventions can play in addressing health inequalities within Sheffield's underserved communities. A key takeaway from the project is the necessity of engaging local women to identify specific barriers to physical activity engagement. The initiative also stresses the importance of improved communication and education for healthcare professionals, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to offer effective support and guidance. Additionally, the focus on diverse physical activity opportunities highlights the need for enjoyable, suitable, and safe activities tailored to women's individual needs and preferences. Moving forward, ongoing collaboration among stakeholders, alongside sustained investment in resources and training, will be crucial for enhancing physical activity engagement and improving health outcomes for pregnant and postnatal women in these communities.

### Recommendations for Moving Forward:



#### **Sustainability of Training Programmes**

Ensure the continued training of professionals as This Mum Moves Ambassadors to maintain a steady supply of knowledgeable advocates who can effectively promote physical activity to women during their childbearing years.



#### **Expand Resource Availability**

Broaden the range of physical activity resources and programmes, incorporating feedback from women to create more diverse offerings that extend beyond gym-based activities and into other areas of Sheffield.



#### **Strengthen Community Partnerships**

Enhance collaboration with local providers, community organisations, and fitness professionals to ensure that pregnant and postnatal women have access to a range of physical activity opportunities, effectively bridging the gap between health and fitness.



#### **Utilise Technology**

Explore technological solutions, such as mobile apps and text reminders, to facilitate ongoing communication about physical activity opportunities and resources.



#### **Community-Centric Research and Evaluation**

Implement community-driven research initiatives that prioritise the voices and experiences of pregnant and postnatal women, ensuring that their insights directly shape programme development.

By implementing these recommendations, the Moving Mums Initiative can further empower women in Sheffield, enhance maternal and infant health outcomes, and more effectively address health inequalities.

# CONTACTS

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For more information or future collaborations, please contact:



**Dr Marlize De Vivo**  
m.de-vivo@shu.ac.uk



**Rachael Weston**  
rachael.weston@yorkshiresport.org



**Sally Kettle**  
sally.kettle@activepregnancyfoundation.org



# Sheffield Hallam University

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DE VIVO, Marlize

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