

# Creating enabling maternity care - dismantling disability barriers



# 3DHB Disability Team

Promote inclusive and accessible healthcare services so all people are comfortable and safe.

We commissioned research on the experiences of mothers with disabilities and parents who have babies with disabilities/impairments

# Literature Review Findings

- Disabled women experience inequalities accessing maternity care and report lower levels of satisfaction than non-disabled women
- The experiences of disabled women in Aotearoa New Zealand mirrors international studies
- Findings in the two most recent Ministry of Health Maternity Consumer Surveys found that disabled women were less satisfied with the overall maternity care they received compared to non-disabled women.

# Lit Review Findings: Mums

- A combination of barriers, namely discriminatory attitudes, inaccessible environments and communication, and inadequate skills and knowledge of healthcare professionals, prevent disabled women from having a positive maternity journey where they are given choice, control and equitable treatment.
- Outdated and disabling stereotypes
- Medicalised understandings of disability and the assumption that disability is a biological condition requiring specialised intervention
- Healthcare professionals often lack the necessary knowledge and expertise to care for disabled women
- Antenatal education, much of the material rarely takes into account the lived realities of disabled women and adaptations
- Disabling environments also have a huge impact

# Lit Review Findings: Babies

- dominance of medicalised understandings of disability and the ways that understandings of disability as deficit and tragedy impacts upon the care they receive
- there is an overall assumption that diagnosis is about the ‘breaking of bad news’
- understandings of disability as deficit and tragedy impacts upon the care they receive
- practitioners’ views and ways of speaking about disability can shape parental conceptions of their children’s identities, qualities, and future possibilities from the outset
- Research consistently points to health care professionals’ use of unsuitable language, including the inappropriate use of medical terminology and inability to talk about impairment and the needs of babies

# Research

- Eight disabled women, one disabled trans man, and ten women who have babies born with impairments were interviewed about their experiences of 3DHB maternity services
- Three LMC midwives, one core midwife and seven CMT midwives were interviewed

# Key Findings

1. Midwives provide women centred and individualised care
2. Good experiences with other health professionals
3. Disabled women experience multiple barriers at the beginning of their maternity journey
4. Diagnosis of baby's impairment
5. Bad experiences with healthcare professionals and the built environment
6. Inadequate knowledge about disability
7. Lack of feeding support
8. Stretched mental health services

# Recommendations

- Disability Rights Training
- Antenatal Education
- Community Connections
- Mental Health Services
- Providing Enabling Care
- Data, research and evaluation