9. **Deaf Nest: Improving pregnancy and childbirth experience for Deaf parents**

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**Theme:** Bringing in better births for mothers and babies

At a time of change where maternity services in the NHS are aspiring to deliver safe high quality maternity care for all women. The challenges of delivering equitable care to women who have hearing problems and are deaf is a challenge that all healthcare professionals need to overcome. Deaf Nest project aims to improve Deaf users’ personal experience, equality of access, choice and control over maternity care. Pregnancy and motherhood are major life events for all women, not least for Deaf women. Nevertheless, they need to be accepted and supported in their choice to become parents and to be cared for and treated like every other woman.

Hearing loss is a major and growing public health issue, currently affecting more than 10 million people in the United Kingdom (Action on Hearing Loss, 2011). Additionally, the World Health Organisation (WHO) (1997) predicts that by 2030 adult onset hearing loss will be in the top 10 disease burdens in the UK, above cataract and diabetes. It has significant personal (Royal National Institute for the Deaf, 2011) and social costs (Shleld, 2006). What evidence is available indicate poorer physical health among deaf people (Sign Health, 2008). Kochln and Rogln (2000) study shows strong correlation between hearing loss and physical, emotional, mental and social wellbeing.

Additionally, there is little literature available on providing maternity care to deaf parents. The lack of relevant literature suggest that deafness and pregnancy are two concepts rarely considered together. Despite the most recently available statistic which shows a dramatic increase in hearing loss, little has been said or done in relation to pregnancy and childbirth. The pregnancy book available for deaf parents costs of £14.99 but hearing pregnant women are given one for free- only one example of inequality in care provision. Consequently, there is an acute need to train midwives and other medical staff in deaf awareness and associated communication skills. In fact, midwives need to integrate the model of care with the vision represented by the six Cs of care, compassion, competence, communication, courage and commitment.

For more information about the Deaf Nest project and full report visit:

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