
 Contact details TBC

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Scotland's Coalition for

HEALTHIER PREGNANCIES, BETTER LIVES

Every expectant mother and father wants the same thing, a safe pregnancy and a happy, healthy baby. Our goal is to help more parents achieve what they already want.

The Issue

The best predictor of birth outcomes is the physical and mental health of a woman at the time of conception. Women who are well prepared and supported are far more likely to have healthy babies. Antenatal care truly matters, but preconception preparation matters even more. The Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland (QNIS) - with support from The National Lottery Community Fund and Cattanach - is focusing on the very earliest causes of inequality and injustice that compromise lives and life chances. Healthier Pregnancies, Better Lives (HPBL) is bringing together key groups throughout Scotland to promote good health and wellbeing – and to avoid predictable harm – even before conception occurs.

25 % of pregnancies

in Scotland currently ends in a termination, miscarriage, stillbirth, significant birth defect or a child facing a diminished future from her/his first breath.

80 % of pregnancies

could be protected from Neural Tube Defects if we embrace the preventative benefits of folic acid (Vitamin B9) by mandating a safe, higher level of folic acid fortification in staple foods.

Partner with us

The wellbeing of prospective parents, and the futures of Scotland's babies should not be left to chance. We CAN do better than passively accepting that so many pregnancies will be unintended, ill-prepared for and too often lead to adverse, unwelcome consequences. Individuals, couples, families, communities and organisations can all play a positive role in determining the life chances of the next generation.

Our actions (or inaction) will affect their lives as profoundly as their postcodes or their genetic codes. A bright future for them - and thus, for Scotland - is within our gift and our grasp.



Women's health

Scotland now has a Women's Health Plan. Its recommendations for pre-pregnancy health, education and care should be fully implemented.



Preparation

Women (and men) should receive the assistance and support that is right for them when they need it, as people and as prospective parents.

Take action

by becoming a DOER and partner in Scotland's Coalition for HPBL



Preconception health, education and care

What our society does (or fails to do) for potential parents is vitally important. Good quality, easily accessible, preconception health, education and care enables people to make well-informed decisions about whether or not to become parents at all – and if so, when to do so. For those people choosing to become parents in the foreseeable future, our collective responsibility is to help them become as physically and mentally well-prepared as possible. Everyone wins when that happens.

Empowerment and preparation, not perfection, are the goals of Scotland's Coalition for Healthier Pregnancies, Better Lives.

Views and experience

In April 2022, the Healthier Pregnancies, Better Lives programme conducted an online survey to understand what Scottish community nurses and midwives already know about preconception health, education and care.

We discovered a passionate and dedicated workforce, keen to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. It was also clear that despite this desire, some systemic gaps were making preconception care challenging. Some respondents said they 'rarely see or deal with people who have not yet conceived or are preparing for pregnancy'.



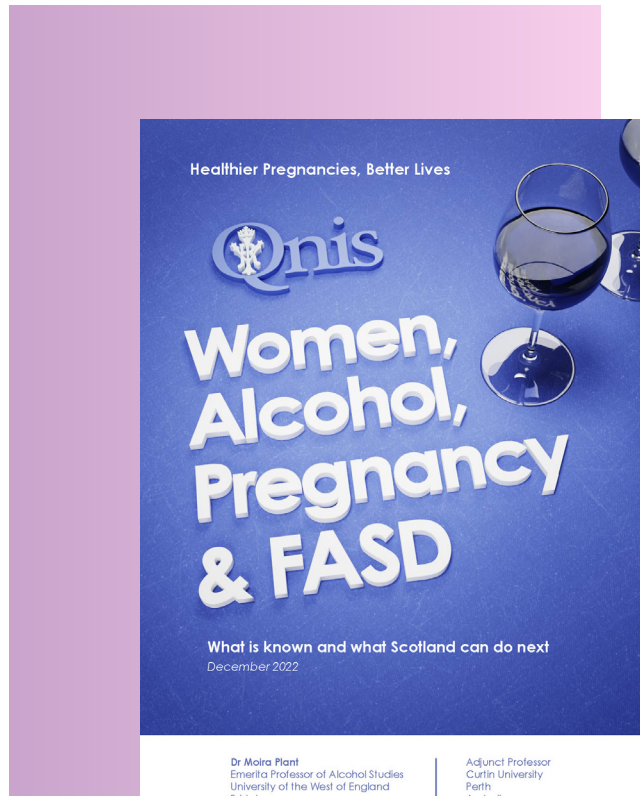
Over 84%

of respondents were comfortable responding to questions or concerns raised by people of reproductive age about avoiding, delaying or preparing for pregnancy.



Only 44%

of respondents felt comfortable initiating a conversation about preventing, delaying or preparing for pregnancy.



Our society tends to think and act as if there are only two phases in reproductive health – avoiding pregnancy or being pregnant. Yet, there is a crucial middle period between contraception and conception. This is when preparing well for pregnancy can best occur.

*Michele Stranger Hunter
HPBL Consultant*

What next?

Making it easier and more effective to prepare well for pregnancy is a core purpose of the Healthier Pregnancies, Better Lives programme.

Not everyone agrees on who should be offering this care, but it is notable that 80% agree that such care should be delivered. There is a significant support for addressing the gap between avoiding pregnancy and being pregnant, i.e., between contraception and conception.



Read the full response to our survey online.



Connect with the team to share your experience.