

Going Digital

Developing resources for women and families in maternity care

A Better Births Summary
February 2016
<http://betterbirths.rcm.org.uk>



THE ROYAL
COLLEGE OF
MIDWIVES



Better Births

Summary

Information for women during pregnancy is provided as part of maternity care in a number of formats including face-to-face appointments, through leaflets, over the phone and online. It is recognised that the use of online sources for seeking health information as well as the use of smartphone and tablet devices for online access is increasing. In line with this trend, there are a number of digital apps and websites available within maternity care for sharing information and supporting decisions as well as interaction through social media.

This Better Births Summary brings together examples of the apps and online information that have been developed for reaching women and families at the time of pregnancy. Here are eight examples of digital projects for maternity in alphabetical order.



1. Baby Buddy App



2. Maternity Assist



3. My Birthplace App in Portsmouth



4. Pain Management



<https://appsto.re/gb/rCqxD>

5. Pocket Midwife



<http://pocketmidwife.org/>



https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nhs.pocketmidwife&hl=en_GB



<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/pocket-midwife/id992156784?mt=8>

6. Reaching Women Using Facebook and Twitter



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N36UOZR0WIU>

7. Ready, Steady, Baby App



<http://www.readysteadybaby.org.uk>

8. Which? Birth Choice



<http://www.which.co.uk/birth-choice/>

There is now a real opportunity to combine approaches for reaching women and their families. The examples highlighted in this Better Births Summary shows that sharing information using digital media is an important and feasible agenda for maternity care.



Website



Webinar



iPhone App



Android App

Background

The Ofcom (2015) report on the use of and attitudes to media in the UK compared trends over the last ten years across different adult age groups. It was found that six out of ten adults go online using their mobile phones or tablet devices and the most accessed websites were google, youtube and Facebook. These were also consistent across younger and older age groups. It is important to note that there were differences reported across socio-economic groups. Just over half (54%) of the least affluent owned a smart phone as compared with three-quarters of the most affluent. Those in the least affluent group are also less likely to use the internet on a weekly basis for majority of the activities including seeking health information.

In terms of health information, it is estimated that downloads of health and fitness apps by women are marginally higher than men (Bonnington, 2013). More specifically for pregnancy, there have been studies focussing on the use of the internet by women in pregnancy. There were indications a decade ago that the internet was used for social support and to research specific problems (Lagan et al., 2006). Recently in an Australian study, 3 out of 4 women reported having used a pregnancy app and the main reasons were for accessing information on foetal development and changes in body during pregnancy (Lupton and Pedersen, 2015). Surveys and studies continue to show the importance of online information, for example, 94% of women reported using the internet to supplement information provided by healthcare professionals (Lagan et al., 2010) and all women in one survey wanted some form of information through digital routes such as maternity apps, text messages or websites (Higgins, 2013).

The opportunity for combining the expertise of healthcare professionals and enabling women and their families to access information digitally is growing. There are a number of projects where maternity care providers are taking the lead in sharing information using apps, websites and having discussions online. This Better Births Summary presents an overview of the digital approaches that have been developed starting with a beginner's guide in the next section.

Focussing on smartphones and tablets, they have some of the features of a personal computer. They are equipped with a camera, microphone, touchscreen displays and a pop-up virtual keyboard for typing. The type of smartphone or tablet will determine the options available and the way in which information is accessed, but the logic remains the same. Similarly to laptops or desktops, information on a website can be accessed through a mobile browser such as chrome and firefox, however apps have been increasing in popularity, and these have to be installed onto the device before it can be used.

To download an app, you typically go to the online store, search for the selected app (or follow links from the relevant websites) and then press 'install'. Apple's App Store, Google Play, and Windows Store are the ones that are relevant for the most commonly used smartphones and tablets. Once the apps are downloaded, they may need wifi or broadband access (to be online) before they can be used, but many information-based apps in this context can also run offline (without internet access) and updates automatically over time.

Making a distinction between devices that will be mainly used to access the information is most important when considering apps. Smartphones and tablets can be used to download apps and interact with the information, however this feature is not available for laptops and desktops, with the exception of tablets that can be used a laptops.

One of the main benefits of using digital information is that whilst printed materials are static, digital information can be interactive and brings together a number of features in a user-friendly manner. For example, an address viewed on a website or an app on a smartphone or tablet can be used to get directions from the current location with just a click, and similarly you can connect quickly by clicking on the phone number. Another important feature of digital media which has been used is the personalisation of the information provided. One usual type of customisation is that by adding in details about the baby's due date, women can personalise the app so that it provides appropriate information at the correct gestation. These are just examples of the interactivity that can be achieved at the moment and features on all the devices are changing quickly, especially for smartphones and tablets.

Midwives and healthcare professionals have been working on a number of projects aimed at bringing information to women and families. Eight examples of apps and websites have been collated as part of the Better Births Summary and the next section provides further information about each of them with links to webinars where they are available.

Eight examples for maternity apps and websites

1. Baby Buddy App

This mobile phone app is aimed at all parents, but especially targets younger parents and those from disadvantaged backgrounds providing information from pregnancy to six months after birth. It can be downloaded for Android and Apple devices and features bitesize information provided on a daily basis tailored to the stage of the pregnancy. There are also options to enter appointments, setting goals, watching videos as well as a geographical map of useful support groups and places near the users. This project was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and Best Beginnings is a charity that has worked with health professionals to develop the information used in the app.

More about the App



<http://www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/babybuddy>

2. Maternity Assist

Maternity Assist is a web-based application designed to provide an information service for pregnant women, their partners, and their friends and wider family. It has been piloted at the Liverpool Women's Hospital. The system sends targeted information by email at relevant times throughout pregnancy and the postnatal period. Women register with Maternity Assist during their pregnancy and nominate those who will provide support. This, in turn, encourages partners, family and friends to get more involved in supporting women. Maternity Assist also provides up to date information on pregnancy related questions and an option to contact midwives for advice and support through a web chat feature.

For more information



<https://liverpool-womens.custhelp.com/app/home>



Website



Webinar



iPhone App



Android App

3. My Birthplace App in Portsmouth

This web-based application was developed by Portsmouth NHS Trust using the Birthplace Study data and local data in a very user friendly format. The team at Portsmouth worked in partnership with women in order for the information to be very accessible and straightforward. The purpose of the app is to support the discussion on place of birth with women, and also highlight the evidence based on national and local evidence. This project was initially funded by The Health Foundation.

More information on the web app and webinar



<http://mybirthplace.org/portsmouth>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgcui429QMo>

4. Pain management

This is produced by the Obstetric Anaesthetist Association focussing on the pain management options available to women. The information is available in 35 languages which makes it a useful tool to use in the labour ward setting to ensure women whose first language is not English are able to make an informed decision about their pain management options. The information is also available as PDF documents accessible from the app. It is available for Android and Apple devices, however it may not be updated to work effectively on some of the latest devices.

Link to download the app



<https://appsto.re/gb/rCqxD>



Website



Webinar



iPhone App



Android App

5. Pocket Midwife

This app has been co-designed by Nottingham University Hospitals, practising midwives and *Appitizedhealth* using feedback from women. It has been piloted in Nottingham with the ability for other Trusts to tailor some of the information and provide locally relevant information. The app is user-friendly with features such as an announcements feature, a week-to-week pregnancy calendar, contact details for the local services, leaflets available in PDF format that can be accessed directly from the app, and ability for interactions through photography and selfies.

For more information and to download the app



<http://pocketmidwife.org/>



https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nhs.pocketmidwife&hl=en_GB



<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/pocket-midwife/id992156784?mt=8>

6. Reaching women using Facebook and Twitter

Using social media can be daunting for health care professionals, but for many women and families it is an easy way to find information at a time that is convenient for them. Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust have used social media to support and engage with women, particularly those in hard to reach groups such as young parents.

Following the development of the project including the Communications Team in the Trust, pilots were carried out. Midwives in the Trust are now hosting a number of Facebook groups for women as part of highlighting their services and encouraging peer support.



Website



Webinar



iPhone App



Android App

They also run a Twitter account @WSHTMidwives for gathering feedback about their experiences. Information on the development process, communication protocols and the day-to-day management of their social media is presented as part of a Better Births webinar.

Watch the webinar



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N36UQZR0WIU>

Guidance on managing social media online can be found through a number of organisations including:

Royal College of Midwives



<http://www.ilearn.rcm.org.uk/enrol/index.php?id=9>

NHS Employers



<http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/need-to-know/social-media-and-the-nhs/social-media-publications>

Nursing and Midwifery Council



<http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/guidance/social-networking-guidance/>

General Medical Council



http://www.gmc-uk.org/static/documents/content/Doctors_use_of_social_media.pdf



Website



Webinar



iPhone App



Android App

7. Ready, Steady, Baby App

NHS Health Scotland has endorsed this comprehensive app which is available for downloading onto Android, Apple, and Blackberry devices. It begins with the pre-conception period providing advice and tips for healthy living, and continues into pregnancy, labour, pain relief option, and the early days together for families. There is also a separate page with information for partners and video clips to watch. External websites are linked through this app to signpost users for further information on public health and other important sources, for example on newborn blood spot screening. The information is also available on a website.

Go to the website



<http://www.readysteadybaby.org.uk>

8. Which? Birth Choice

This website helps women choose where to have their baby and was developed and launched by Which? in collaboration with the BirthChoiceUK team. It works by entering the postcode and using this to navigate all the information for a locality. Women can be signposted to use this site to explore the options available to them using a birth choice tool, looking at the data for the different types of facilities in each unit. Information for all the choices is available on the website including home, midwife-led units, and obstetric units.

Go to the website



<http://www.which.co.uk/birth-choice/>



Website



Webinar



iPhone App



Android App

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