Lorna Orriss-Dib and Healthwatch Essex Research Ambassadors - The Dual Challenge of Pregnancy and IBD

Healthwatch Essex

There is little research on how pregnancy and caring for a newborn affects the lives of women and birthing people who are already self-managing a long-term condition like Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). Healthwatch Essex responded to this gap in health data by conducting in-depth research interviews with women with IBD who had given birth in the last 5 years and a survey of 20 individuals with IBD. By gathering and analysing this data, they published and widely shared a research report with recommendations on how health services can better understand and support the pregnancy and postnatal needs of women and birthing people with IBD. They also directly responding to participants' concerns that there was not a centralised information source on pregnancy and IBD in the UK. Working with the participants, members of a national 'Breastfeeding and IBD' support group, and IBD nurse specialists, they co-produced an information resource – 'From Bump to Baby with IBD'. The resource guides others with IBD through every stage of their pregnancy journey, including trying for a baby, each trimester, and the postnatal period. The resource foregrounds lived experience quotes to offer reassurance. It also includes what to discuss with their IBD team and midwife, empowering the user with knowledge about what support and information they can access at each stage of their pregnancy.