



## Women's Health in Dorset – how public feedback led to training for health care professionals – a case study

### The issue

Although women in the UK live longer on average than men, evidence shows they spend a greater proportion of their lives in ill health or disability compared with men. The government's Women's Health Strategy: Call for Evidence received nearly 100,000 responses from women in England and this, together with feedback from local systems, highlighted several issues with women's health services.

The Women's Health Strategy for England (Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), July 2022) [Women's Health Strategy for England - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/Women's_Health_Strategy_for_England_-_GOV.UK.pdf) sets out 10-year ambitions for boosting the health and wellbeing of women and girls, and for improving how the health and care system listens to women.

In March 2023, the government announced £25 million for Women's Health Hub (WHH) expansion.

In Dorset, a collaborative group came together to review, improve and enhance the education and information available to support Women's Health. This group included NHS Dorset, Health Innovation Wessex, University Hospitals Dorset, Dorset County Hospital, Dorset Women's Community Interest Company (CIC), SimComm Academy and Bournemouth University (BU).

### What we did

Dorset Women's CIC and Bournemouth University led in person and online engagement events with the public to understand the challenges, needs and barriers relating to Women's Health (March 2023 – March 2025). The overwhelming response identified a need for more training for health care professionals in several areas so that they are better equipped to help, support and treat women. Women reported not being listened to, feeling their pain or other symptoms were dismissed, difficulty with access to services and a lack of information especially around the menopause.

Our collaborative group provided training for health care professionals (HCPs) to address the feedback received from the women of Dorset.

Several training events were undertaken including:

- Training for HCPs undertaking vaginal examinations to recognise pelvic floor dysfunction and be able to confidently teach basic exercises and refer for further review if required. Sixteen HCPs attended the pelvic floor training over two sessions.
- Training for primary care professionals on menopause symptoms: different presentations, treatment options and onward referral support both within the NHS and the Dorset Menopause Support Group.
- Racial discrimination training for HCPs in any health care setting to be more aware of racial, cultural and minoritised groups to ensure that everyone is treated equally, and people feel listened to. Twelve HCPs attended the training.
- 218 HCPs attended three structured Q&A Menopause training webinars, and over 90 members of the public attended the BU symposium with 55 in person and more online.

## What impact did it have?

- For pelvic floor health - **1100 women** will be able to download the 'Squeezy' App to support self-management.
- As a result of the pelvic floor training, **nurses from sexual health** who attended the training have been very proactive post training and are **spreading their newfound skills** and one of their leads will be presenting to the whole sexual health clinical team to cascade this training further.
- Following the menopause webinars, it was reported that **92% of staff** reported to be **somewhat or extremely confident** in managing menopause symptoms after attending the training.
- The impact from the staff racial discrimination training was that prior to training 55% of participants had limited or no knowledge identifying the characteristics of an effective ally and champion; and after the workshop, **100% of participants had good or excellent knowledge**. They can take this forward into their practice and utilise this to listen and support patients more effectively.

## Contacts for further information:

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