



# Creating Scotland's Coalition for Healthier Pregnancies, Better Lives

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 just as much. 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.

## Every expectant mother and father wants a safe pregnancy and a happy, healthy baby

That's a great starting point for everyone engaging with parents-to-be because they don't need to be persuaded to want a thriving baby. The unwelcome news is that roughly one in four pregnancies in Scotland currently ends in a termination, miscarriage, stillbirth, significant birth defect or a child facing a diminished future.



## Many unwelcome outcomes are preventable

The key to success is preparing well for pregnancy, far enough in advance. Many issues, problems and risks are better sorted out before pregnancy; stopping smoking, drinking no alcohol and achieving a healthy weight. Some benefits can ONLY be achieved by actions taken well before pregnancy. These include having enough vitamin B9 (folic acid) to prevent most Neural Tube Defects and substituting safer medications for those that can cause permanent harm to a baby.

## Women's health and wellbeing prior to pregnancy truly matter

Scotland now has a Women's Health Plan. Its recommendations for pre-pregnancy health, education and care should be fully implemented. It is important for women to receive timely assistance and the kinds of support they desire, as people and as prospective parents. Empowerment and preparation, not perfection, are the goals of HPBL.

## Together, we can help women & men get what they already want

What our society does 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 - and if so, when. For those people choosing to become parents in the foreseeable future, the goal is to encourage and enable them to become as physically and mentally well-prepared as possible. Everyone wins when that happens.



## Partner with QNIS to create Scotland's Coalition for Healthier Pregnancies, Better Lives

The wellbeing of prospective parents, and the futures of babies throughout Scotland should not be left to chance. Passively accepting that so many pregnancies will be unintended, ill-prepared for and lead to adverse, unwelcome consequences is **not** the best we can do. Individuals, couples, families, communities and organisations can all play a powerful, helpful role in determining the life chances of the next generation. The positive actions taken (or not taken) 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.



No one can do everything, but everyone can do something to create Healthier Pregnancies, Better Lives throughout Scotland.

Please explore the possibilities of becoming a partner in this emerging Scottish Coalition by contacting: [HPBL@qnis.org.uk](mailto:HPBL@qnis.org.uk)