

NIHR PenARC Annual Report 24/25 – Mature Impact Story

Preventing Incontinence after pregnancy: APPEAL

Urinary incontinence affects up to five million UK women, often during pregnancy, disrupting daily life, impacting mental health, and increasing NHS pressure. *APPEAL*, a midwife-led training programme that empowers women with simple pelvic floor exercises during pregnancy, reduces the risk of incontinence after birth.

PenARC-supported researchers co-developed *APPEAL* with clinicians and women and have created an effective, scalable implementation programme including a 5-step training package, trainer manual, and patient-facing resources. Research evidence shows that women supported by APPEAL-trained midwives are less likely to leak. The programme uses a “train the trainer” approach and has been delivered in 9 trusts with 9 more planning delivery and is recommended in the [NHS Long Term Plan](#). More than 200 midwife service leads have been trained who have then trained 100s more to provide the service.

A partnership with Health Innovation South West and parenting charities is promoting further spread. Working with women from underserved populations in rural and coastal communities the team have produced materials which allow pregnant women from these communities to directly access the programme.

<https://healthinnovationsouthwest.com/programmes/appeal/>

The programme is now being adapted for use in primary care settings, aiming for national rollout.