

Patient Information

Perinatal Mental Health

Women's Services



Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to help explain about perinatal mental health problems and the service we provide. **Perinatal** is the name given to the period around childbirth.

What is perinatal mental health?

Although it's normal to have periods of worry and stress when you're pregnant, some women have feelings that don't go away and this can be a sign of something more serious. Perinatal mental health problems are those which occur during pregnancy or in the first year following the birth of a child. Perinatal mental illness affects up to 1 in 5 women; some women have pre-existing mental health conditions before being pregnant or may have had previous perinatal mental health needs that require additional management during the perinatal period.

Perinatal mental health problems can include a wide range of conditions, such as:

- Severe postnatal depression
- Severe anxiety disorder
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Personality disorders
- Existing eating disorders
- Bipolar disorder
- Postpartum psychosis
- Schizophrenia

Please refer to page 6 in this leaflet for information about some of the perinatal mental health conditions that can develop throughout the perinatal period.

What is the Community Perinatal Mental Health Service?

The Community Perinatal Team is led by consultant psychiatrists with obstetric consultant leads in perinatal mental health, and a specialist midwife who acts as a source of support and guidance for professionals, women and their families within the Maternity Unit.

The onset or exacerbation of mental health conditions during the perinatal period can happen very quickly, causing difficult challenges to women and their families and, if not dealt with as soon as possible, can pose a risk to the pregnancy / newborn baby. Recognising these women who need additional support and treatment early on, can minimise such risks.

The service is designed to identify women who may have additional mental health needs as early as the pregnancy booking appointment. The team will work with the woman to support her with her mental and emotional wellbeing, ensure she is on the right pathway of care, has the correct referrals completed and is directed to other avenues of support available.

Who are women referred to?

This depends on the woman's individual mental health history. At your pregnancy booking appointment, the midwife will discuss such information with you and will complete an 'Information Sharing' form, with your consent. Your mental health history will then be assessed by the perinatal mental health midwife and the Community Perinatal Mental Health Team. You will then be informed via text message /phone call if a referral has been made, such as to the:

- Community Midwife, GP
- Perinatal Mental Health Midwife Clinic
- Wellbeing Team
- Community Perinatal Mental Health Team/Obstetric Joint Care
- No referral required at this time

What care can I expect?

Your community midwife may offer you more frequent antenatal and postnatal appointments to ensure your mental health is cared for alongside your physical health. This will be discussed at your first community midwife appointment (usually held at the GP surgery) at around 16 weeks' of pregnancy.

Community Perinatal Mental Health Team

The community perinatal mental health team supports mums to be, new mums and families who are likely to, or who are experiencing significant mental health problems during the perinatal period. They accept professional referrals only. The team offers:

- Consultation with a specialist doctor
- Specialist psychological therapies
- Additional support from specialist perinatal workers
- Pre-conception counselling
- Birth care planning

Wellbeing Team

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is an option of a talking therapy held as 1:1 sessions that can help individuals experiencing mental health problems, such as:

- Worry
- Low mood
- Stress
- Insomnia (problems sleeping)

Professional and self-referrals are accepted, and sessions are free and confidential.

Contact and self-referral information for local wellbeing teams

◆ Wellbeing Team, Hertfordshire

Self-referral online form: <https://www.hpft.nhs.uk/services/community-services/wellbeing-service/referrals/self-referral/>

Single Point of Access Telephone: ☎ **0300 777 0707**

◆ Wellbeing Team, Bedfordshire

Telephone: ☎ **01234 880400** (Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm)

Email: elt-tr.bedfordiapt@nhs.net

◆ Wellbeing Team, Cambridge

Self-referral online form: <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/services/pws/psychological-wellbeing-service.htm>

Telephone: ☎ 0300 300 0055

(Monday to Friday, 9am - 4pm, excluding Bank Holidays)

Please note: The Community Perinatal Mental Health Service is in addition to your usual antenatal and postnatal care held at either the hospital or in the community.

Some of the perinatal mental health conditions that can develop throughout the Perinatal period:

Anxiety

Perinatal anxiety is anxiety experienced during pregnancy or in the year after childbirth. You might hear it called prenatal or antenatal anxiety if you experience anxiety during pregnancy; postnatal anxiety if you experience it after giving birth.

OCD

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a type of anxiety disorder. OCD can be distressing and significantly interfere with your life, but treatment can help you keep it under control. Perinatal OCD is when you experience OCD during pregnancy or in the year after giving birth. If you experience perinatal OCD, you're likely to have obsessions and compulsions that relate to your feelings about being a parent and your baby.

Perinatal Depression

Perinatal depression is depression experienced during pregnancy (known as ante or prenatal depression) or after childbirth (known as postnatal depression). Many people are aware of postnatal depression (PND) but it's less commonly known that you can experience depression during pregnancy as well. Help could be in the form of talking therapies, medication or a combination of both.

Postpartum Psychosis

Postpartum psychosis (PP) is a serious, but rare, diagnosis occurring in around 1 in 1,000 births. You're likely to experience a mix of depression, mania and psychosis. You are most likely to be offered an antipsychotic drug to manage your mood and psychotic symptoms. Postpartum psychosis is very different from the "baby blues". It's a serious mental illness and should be treated as a medical emergency. It's sometimes called puerperal psychosis or postnatal psychosis.

Further Information

- ◆ **Mind** - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/postnatal-depression-and-perinatal-mental-health/perinatal-anxiety>
- ◆ **Tommy's** - <https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/Im-pregnant/mental-health-during-and-after-pregnancy>
- ◆ **Association for Post Natal Illness** - Provides support to mothers with postnatal depression.
☎ 0207 386 0868
<https://apni.org/>
- ◆ **Anxiety UK** - Support, help and information for anyone with an anxiety disorder.
☎ 0844 477 5774
<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>
- ◆ **Action Postpartum Psychosis (APP)** - Information and support for anyone who's experienced postpartum psychosis, including a peer support network and an online forum.
<https://www.app-network.org/>

Information regarding medication during pregnancy and/or breastfeeding:

- ◆ <http://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/>
- ◆ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg192>
- ◆ http://www.uktis.org/html/info_patients.html

Diet and Exercise (NHS website)

- ◆ <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/pregnancy>
- ◆ <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/>
- ◆ <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/?tabname=recipes-and-tips>

What if I have any questions?

You will be given appropriate telephone numbers when you attend your booking appointment so that you will always have the opportunity to contact someone should you need to do so.

If you have any concerns or questions, please speak to a member of the maternity team.

**You and your baby are important to us –
Thank you for choosing The Diamond Jubilee Maternity Unit
East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust**

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