

Wales Perinatal Mental Health Network Newsletter

Newsletter 3

Welcome to the latest edition of the Perinatal Mental Health Newsletter

Hello from the Wales Perinatal Mental Health Network team.

What strange times we find ourselves in.

At my interview for the Clinical Lead post, I was asked how I would react to a change in government and policy; there was certainly no hint of how we would all have to negotiate our way through a global pandemic!

However, negotiate we have. During this time, we have seen amazing examples of how you are all able to adapt, be flexible, demonstrate your creative sides, and just get on with it.

It has not been easy though, and there are times where we have all needed to support each other.

It is these qualities that have shone through most, and ensuring that we have time and a space to keep connected, to share, to support and to be supported; providing a safe space and time in your incredibly busy weeks, has been our priority as a network team.

Some developmental work may have paused for a time, but continuing to facilitate time to be and think, and remain connected, is key for all of us.

Sharon Fernandez

National Clinical Lead for Perinatal Mental Health



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Caring for the carers

Over the past few months, our home and working lives have changed completely with the focus on preventing the spread of coronavirus.

However, mental health advice and support has not stopped because there is a pandemic.

The dedication and flexibility of professionals across Wales has ensured that support is still there for pregnant mums, new mums, dads, partners and their families throughout this time.

Inevitably, this can take its toll and it is essential that we are caring for the carers, too.

Tips for taking care of yourself and colleagues... why not try:

- Reaching out and phoning a colleague rather than sending an email - ask how they are doing.
- Thinking about who makes you feel better and making a point of getting in touch with them.
- Paying attention to what you are eating, drinking and how you are sleeping.
- Making time for yourself outside of work, focusing on the things you enjoy or that help you to relax.
- Practicing positive thinking. Each day try to notice three things that have gone well, no matter how big or small.

Remember - it's okay to say that you're not okay.

Useful links

- Headspace has a range of relaxation and meditation exercises. It's [free for NHS staff](#) to join until the end of 2020, and there are also [free resources](#) available for all.
- SilverCloud is a web-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy programme available free to NHS Wales staff. Ask your manager for more info.
- For general tips on looking after your mental wellbeing, visit the [Public Health Wales 'How are you doing?' website](#).
- Health Education & Improvement Wales has guidance on providing [support following a traumatic incident](#).

Helplines

- [The C.A.L.L. Helpline](#) - call 0800 132 737 or text 'help' to 81066.
- [Mind Cymru Infoline](#) - call 0300 123 3393, email info@mind.org.uk or text 86463.
- [Samaritans Cymru](#) - call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org

Focus on fathers

While it is well known that some mums experience depression, anxiety and other mental health problems in pregnancy and after birth, it is still less known that dads can experience problems at this time, too.

Ahead of **International Fathers' Mental Health Day on 22 June**, we are focusing on this topic and have articles from Mark Williams - Fathers Reaching Out, and Adrian Green - Mental Health Foundation.



International Fathers' Mental Health Day

Mark Williams - Fathers Reaching Out

In the last few months, we have seen a landmark move as Welsh Government has acknowledged the needs of fathers in the Together for Mental Health Plan 2019-2022.

This is welcome news for our generation, and generations to come.

Fathers, like mothers, struggle with their mental health for various reasons, whether it's a past history of anxiety, depression or trauma, or maybe feeling like a failure as a parent as they struggle to develop a relationship with their new baby.

Every parent deserves the best chance to be a good parent.

Research has shown that new fathers are up to 47 times more at risk of suicide during the perinatal period than at any other time in a man's life. As suicide is the biggest killer in men under 50 in the UK, it is vital to have a conversation with fathers during this time.

Maternal mental health wasn't always recognised as a significant issue and now it is; let's hope that new fathers' mental health is following that same journey.

With International Fathers' Mental Health Day happening this year on 22 June, we are hoping everyone in Wales can support the day.

It's important that we 'Think Mum, Think Baby and Think Family', as not supporting dads can impact on a mum's mental health, and may impact on the child's development, too.

We know that 1 in 10 fathers can suffer postnatal depression, with anxiety also being far higher in new parents.

I have always believed that by supporting all parents' mental health in the perinatal period, it will lead to far better outcomes for the whole family and enable the baby/ child to achieve their full potential.

What is important is providing space and time to listen, to have a conversation with all new parents, and to let them know that mental health difficulties can happen to anyone.

If, as professionals, we can all agree to make time to talk with dad as well as mum, then we will begin to create a movement - a movement to ask all parents 'How Are You?'

This small gesture of asking 'How are you?' will not only benefit the whole family, but will also contribute to providing every child with the best start in life, too.

Focus on fathers

Dads & Football Project

Adrian Green - Project Manager

The **Mental Health Foundation (MHF)** is running a Dads & Football Project, with their partners Cardiff City Football Club, to support fathers with young children.

The MHF are finding that dads often feel marginalised in the health care system and are not given a fair voice to share their feelings and experiences, from pregnancy and beyond.

Fathers can go through a tough time too, as they have to watch their partner endure pain during pregnancy and labour, whilst feeling helpless.

“ ...the person doing the scan, the person doing whatever, to them I was just the person carrying the clothes, the bags and that's it. And that's kind of what I found. ”

They can often go on an emotional rollercoaster both during and after the pregnancy; this rollercoaster can bring feelings of sadness, happiness, fear, anxiety but also excitement. Often they do not speak about their feelings and experiences.

The Dads & Football Project is about understanding what they go through from the highs to the lows, and to give them a platform to share.



We want dads to help us inform future research on the needs of the dad and what they felt was lacking for them during their journey to fatherhood.

Our take home thought from this is that men do like to talk, they just need a platform to do it, and this quote sums it all up:

“ ... how I see it once you have an issue, you get very self-indulgent, you think nobody else is going through what you're going through, but when you listen to other people and find out they are going through the same, you can relate and knit-pick at the areas you are struggling with and then talk about it and get better. ”

More about the project

The MHF has teamed up with Cardiff City FC Community Foundation and Cardiff University for a new project looking at the experiences of men as they become fathers.

The Dads & Football project is aimed at fathers of young children and is funded by the Wellcome Trust. It is free to participating Dads.

Initially, it was set up to enable dads to have the opportunity to talk fatherhood and play football, however, with the impact of COVID, it has had to adapt and change. Football has paused and support is provided virtually for all fathers with children under 11 years old across Wales.

However, there is still the opportunity to spend time sharing experiences with researchers about what it has been like for them to become fathers.

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/wales



Perinatal Mental Health Training 2020

Over **140 NHS staff** working within perinatal mental health received free training between January and March 2020, as part of a Welsh Government funded programme organised by the Wales Perinatal Mental Health Network National Team.

A huge thank you goes to Bronni Preston Williams for organising the training in such a short space of time!

Delegates attended the following training days:

- Perinatal Training for Community & Inpatient Perinatal Mental Health Team Managers
- iHV Perinatal and Infant Mental Health champions
- Trainee Psychiatrist training
- Action on Post-partum Psychosis (APP) - South & West Wales

Unfortunately, due to coronavirus, we had to postpone remaining training dates in March. We have now confirmed this training will take place virtually and are awaiting new dates to share with those who registered to attend in March.

We also hope to identify training opportunities for more service areas in the future - we will keep you posted!

“ I feel more confident to share my learning and use these insights now in my own practice. ”

Training delegate 2020

“ Hearing viewpoints of other MDT members added depth and more enquiry to management of PNMH across services. ”

Training delegate 2020

“ I am looking forward to sharing information in (a) training format to those HVs who are less confident in dealing with mental health. ”

Training delegate 2020

“ (I enjoyed) the humour, such a wealth of knowledge shared within the group due to different disciplines. ”

Training delegate 2020

Update from the Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA)

Maternal mental health support more important than ever during COVID-19

The Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) have launched new resources for Maternal Mental Health Awareness week to support women and families during COVID-19.

In the uncertain times of COVID-19, three things remain clear:

- 1 Perinatal stress and mental health needs are increased from an already high level.
- 2 If left untreated, mental illness during pregnancy or in the first year after birth will continue to have a [devastating impact](#) during and beyond the pandemic.
- 3 Perceived and real access to care at every level is reduced, and a proactive approach is needed to overcome these barriers.

That is why it is even more important that women in the perinatal period can access the specialist support they and their families need during the crisis.

What is MMHA doing to help?

To ensure women and families in the UK receive the care they need during the pandemic, MMHA are urging decision-makers to **PLAN** with the mental as well as physical health needs of women and their families in mind, during and beyond COVID-19.

The PLAN can be downloaded in [English](#) and in [Welsh](#).

MMHA members, staff and leading experts have collaborated to produce guidance to protect the mental wellbeing of new and expectant mums, and for women who are unwell with maternal mental health problems during the pandemic. The guidance is available in [English](#) and [Welsh](#).



MMHA are also supporting a new [UK wide survey](#) by Home Start, Best Beginnings and the Parent Infant Foundation, which aims to capture the experiences of expecting a baby or being a parent to a very young child during COVID-19.

How you can help

Help MMHA spread the word to ensure maternal mental health remains a top priority now and as we move out of lockdown.

- **Share the 'Plea to PLAN'** with your key contacts
- **Follow and retweet our calls** from [@MMHAlliance](#)
- **Share the expert perinatal mental wellbeing guidance** with women and families
- **Share the survey** to encourage as many pregnant women, new mums and their partners to talk about their COVID-19 experiences

Get in touch!

We're keen to get your views on the newsletter and ideas for future content, so please get in touch at PNMH.Network@wales.nhs.uk





Useful information and links

You'll find some useful documents and resources below - just click on the titles to find out more.

[Perinatal Mental Health Network resources](#)

NHS staff can access a range of useful documents and guidance on our SharePoint page.

[NICE - Antenatal and postnatal mental health: clinical management and service guidance](#)

This guideline covers recognising, assessing and treating mental health problems in women who are planning to have a baby, are pregnant, or have had a baby or been pregnant in the past year. Updated February 2020.

[Eating disorders and pregnancy](#)

Information and resources on how best to support pregnant women and mothers with eating disorders.

[Alberta Family Wellness Initiative \(AFWI\)](#)

The Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (AFWI) mobilises knowledge about early brain development and its connection to lifelong physical and mental health, including addiction.

[Perinatal Peer Support Principles](#)

A set of five values designed to give peer supporters the confidence to create and deliver support that meets the needs of women and families affected by mental health problems.

[Competency framework for perinatal mental health - Health Education England](#)

While we await colleagues in England to update and confirm permission to adopt / adapt the Competency Framework for use in Wales, the existing Framework is available online. It outlines the skills, knowledge and abilities required for any healthcare professional to work with all people in the perinatal period.

[Women's Health after Motherhood](#)

Free online course through FutureLearn, aimed at mums to take care of their physical and mental health after giving birth. Check their website for the next dates the course will run.