

MATERNAL MENTAL
HEALTH ALLIANCE
everyone's business

Plea to national and local decision makers to PLAN for perinatal mental health care during and beyond COVID-19

The Maternal Mental Health Alliance's **Everyone's Business campaign** aims to improve the lives of all women throughout the UK who experience perinatal mental health problems.

All women should receive the care they and their families need during pregnancy and the first years after birth, wherever and whenever they need it, as described in [national guidelines and recommendations](#).

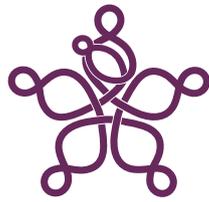
In the uncertain times of Covid-19 three things remain clear regarding the mental health of pregnant women, new mums and their families:

- 1 Their stress and mental health needs are increased from an already high level¹
- 2 If left untreated, mental illness during pregnancy or in the first year after birth will continue to have a devastating impact during and for a long time after the Covid-19 pandemic
- 3 Perceived and real access to care at every level is reduced; a proactive approach is needed to overcome these barriers

To ensure women and their families receive the care they need during Covid-19, we urge national and local decision makers to **PLAN with the *mental* as well as physical health needs of women and their families in mind.**

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1. Even in normal times more than 1 in 10 women will experience a mental health problem during pregnancy or within the first year after having a baby.



P **Protect** the perinatal mental health workforce and plans through and beyond this crisis

Essential perinatal mental health services have long had worrying gaps, with plans and pledges² made by UK governments to address this. While other areas of the health service may be able to postpone or cancel procedures if necessary, women are still having babies and *need the care of sufficiently staffed and supported services, including specialist perinatal mental health, maternity, health visiting, primary care, parent-infant and third sector services.*

L **Link-up** the mental health care and support available for women and families during this time

To prevent women falling through the gaps right now, services – including specialist perinatal mental health, maternity, health visiting, primary care, parent-infant and third sector – need *maximum coordination to synchronise online signposting to up-to-date information, encourage women and their families to seek expert help if they need it, and facilitate access.*

A **Acknowledge** the impact of the crisis on perinatal mental health and its potential long-term consequences

Heightened stress at this time of crisis can have a longer-term impact on mother³, as well as baby and the wider family. *Reducing avoidable stresses (including in the workplace), increased support, and extra vigilance to spot the signs of developing illness are crucial now.*

N **Navigate** the crisis while prioritising the perinatal mental health needs of women and families and proactively encouraging them to seek help early

To prevent avoidable suffering – in some cases tragedy – and reduce the huge economic burden on society, *the mental health of pregnant women and new mums needs to be given equal priority to physical health, including by mums and families themselves.*

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2. These include in Scotland, Perinatal and infant mental health managed clinical network (PIMCN) Delivery Effective Services report 2018, as well as 'Better Mental Health in Scotland' the delivery plan for the Government's programme; Wales, Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2019-2022; Northern Ireland, the New Decade, New Approach deal and commitment by the new Executive to produce its separate Mental Health Action Plan, England, NHS Long Term Plan 2019; and NHS Interim People Plan 2019.

3. The perinatal period offers a unique opportunity to enhance the emotional wellbeing / mental health of two generations at once. However, failure to identify risk early means problems / illnesses can be more severe, recovery far more difficult, and the consequences longer lasting.