
Your perinatal mental health journey: How we can help

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Anyone embarking on a journey should be clear on two things: Where they are starting from, and where they want to be. Without these two essential pieces of information, planning and successfully undertaking the journey will be difficult, if not impossible.

[The Mums and Babies in Mind mapping tool](#) aims to help local partnerships to answer these questions in relation to their journey to improve perinatal mental health services.

The [mapping tool](#) is the first resource on our [new online hub](#), which launches today. It sets out, in one place, standards relating to all the services that support women with perinatal mental illness and their families. It attempts to consolidate the visions set out in different reports, standards and guidance, to summarise what ‘good’ looks like. This is the description of ‘where we want to be’.

[The tool](#) is designed to enable local partners to rate their current service offer against the standards. Therefore it can also provide them with a shared understanding of ‘where we are now’.

We hope the [mapping tool](#) will enable local partners to get a clear picture of the strengths and gaps in their local services, which can inform future plans and priorities. The tool brings together standards for different services – such as midwifery, health visiting, mental health and the voluntary sector – in one place. We hope this will help partners to get a comprehensive picture of the quality and sufficiency of services right across the care pathway, to inform joined-up local action. It also pulls out performance on key cross-cutting themes, such as user voice, support for dads and workforce development.



In developing the tool we sought the views of a number of [Maternal Mental Health Alliance members](#) who provided great insights and ideas. It has been a complex task to pull together such a broad range of standards into a single tool; to be comprehensive and yet not create a tool that is onerous to use. We aren't sure that we have the content and format of the tool completely right yet, and we are keen to test it and improve it based on your feedback.

Our four localities have been using the tool to map their local services. This will both inform local planning and activity, and help us to create a baseline against which we can evaluate the impact of the project.

The sites are completing the mapping activity in different ways. Some have already reviewed services, and are using the mapping tool to check and update their understanding of their local offer. Others are using the tool to bring together local partners and create a firm foundation of shared understanding, from which they will develop clear joint workplans for future work.

At the end of July I facilitated a great workshop in Blackpool to begin their mapping work. The workshop brought together a wide range of partners who showed a passion for perinatal mental health. We printed out large, simplified versions of the mapping standards and – armed with pens and red, orange and green stickers – attendees split into small groups and gave their views on how the local offer matched up to the standards. This exercise kick-started a number of useful conversations, as attendees learned about different services and challenged each other to judge whether current provision was 'good enough'. I have no doubt that these conversations in themselves informed and inspired those present.



Today we are launching the current version of the [mapping tool](#) on our new [MABIM online hub](#). The online hub also contains our [blog](#), and will be a repository for all the tools, resources and reports we create through the MABIM project. A key aim of the project is to share the learning from our four sites with a wider audience, to support improvements in services for mums and babies across the UK.

We hope that the mapping tool can be useful to all those across the UK who are working to develop their local perinatal mental health care pathway. As this is the first iteration of a tool that we are keen to develop, it would be great if anyone who uses it could let us know how they use it and what they think about the content and format. Please do send your feedback to shogg@mentalhealth.org.uk. Happy mapping!

[Mums and Babies in Mind](#) supports local leaders in four areas of England to improve care and quality of life for mums with mental health problems during pregnancy and the first year of life, and their babies.

Read the press release on the launch of our [mapping tool and online hub](#).

Read more from the [Mums and Babies in Mind blog](#):

- *[13/9/16: Emma's story: Beyond Birth Trauma](#)*
- *[30/8/16: Six tips for the Perinatal Mental Health Development Fund](#)*
- *[25/7/16: We know what good looks like](#)*

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