

Consensus Statement on the improvement of Perinatal Mental Health services in Northern Ireland

This consensus statement outlines our intent to work together, with support from all the Northern Ireland Political Parties, to improve the lives of mothers, infants, families and communities affected by perinatal mental health problems in Northern Ireland.

We are requesting that all Political Parties in Northern Ireland officially sign-up to this consensus statement as a first step to making this a reality.

What is 'Perinatal Mental Illness'?

Perinatal mental illness refers to mental illness during pregnancy and one year after birth. Examples of perinatal mental health illnesses include antenatal and postnatal anxiety and depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), birth trauma and postpartum psychosis.

These conditions can develop suddenly and range from mild and moderate to extremely severe, requiring different kinds of care and/or treatment. Perinatal mental illnesses are a major public health issue, not just because of their adverse impact on the mother, but also because they can impact the emotional, cognitive and even physical development of the child, with potentially serious long-term consequences.

In many areas, including Northern Ireland, perinatal mental illness goes unrecognised, undiagnosed and untreated, leading to avoidable suffering for women and their families.

Perinatal Mental Health Facts

- More than 1 in 10 women develop a mental illness during pregnancy or in the first year after having a baby
- 7 in 10 women hide or underplay the severity of their illness
- Suicide is a leading cause of death for women during pregnancy and one year after giving birth

Economic Cost

The London School of Economics and Centre for Mental Health report '*Cost of Perinatal mental health problems*' showed that perinatal mental health problems carry a long-term cost to society of around £8.1 billion for each one-year cohort of births in the UK.

Alarming gaps in Northern Ireland

- In 80% of Northern Ireland, women and their families cannot access specialist perinatal mental health services.
- There is no inpatient Mother and Baby Unit in Northern Ireland (or the whole island of Ireland).

Current research by Queens University, Belfast

Research by Queen's University Belfast has revealed for the first time the prevalence of self-reported mental illness in pregnant women in Northern Ireland.

Released April 2018, this new study, which is one of the largest of its kind worldwide, looked at data from 142,000 maternities from 2010 to 2015.

Almost one fifth of women reported a history of mental disorder, for example bipolar disorder, depression and schizophrenia. Compared to women who did not report a history of mental disorder these pregnancies were more likely to result in premature deliveries and babies born with low birth weight. This research reveals for the first time the prevalence of self-reported mental illness in pregnant women in Northern Ireland.

Funding specialist perinatal mental health services in Northern Ireland (and across the UK)

While England, Scotland and Wales have all faced similar challenges with gaps in their perinatal mental health services, each have experienced significant improvements recently due to specific and targeted investment, which mean that lives are being changed and saved. This is not the case in Northern Ireland. While all stakeholders are supportive in principal of making change, the investment has not yet been made available.

The Rt Hon David Cameron MP (the then Prime Minister), has committed a total of £290 million for perinatal mental health services over 5 years to England (from January 2016) in addition to £75 million committed by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne (Budget 2015).

As a useful start, funding needs to be secured for Northern Ireland to develop sustainable specialist community perinatal mental health services through ring-fencing of funding pledged by David Cameron via the Barnett formula. If Northern Ireland was to receive a population matched sum through the Barnett formula - which was then ring-fenced - this would help to establish these much needed specialist community perinatal mental health services.

RQIA review into Perinatal Mental Health

The RQIA review into Perinatal Mental Health, January 2017, makes 11 recommendations to support improvement in Northern Ireland's Perinatal Mental Health services, including:

1. 'The Department of Health should work collaboratively with all key stakeholders including the Public Health Agency, HSC trusts, General Practitioners and service users to develop and progress a model for the development of specialist perinatal mental health teams in each HSC trust.'
2. 'The Department of Health should work collaboratively with all key stakeholders to develop and progress a model for a single regional Mother and Baby Unit in Northern Ireland.'
3. 'The HSC Board should ensure that community based peer support services are developed within an overall plan for specialist perinatal mental health services in Northern Ireland in collaboration with relevant voluntary organisations and Sure Start'

Maternal Mental Health Alliance & Everyone's Business Campaign

The Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) is a coalition of UK organisations committed to improving the mental health and wellbeing of women and their children in pregnancy and the first postnatal year. This acknowledges the extensive evidence that investing in mental health at this early stage can have a dramatic impact on long-term outcomes for mothers, fathers, children, families and society. The MMHA currently comprises over 80 organisations, including professional bodies such as Royal Colleges and organisations that represent, or provide care and support to, parents and families.

The MMHA's Everyone's Business campaign calls for all women throughout the UK who experience perinatal mental health problems to receive the care they and their families need, wherever and whenever they need it. In Northern Ireland the campaign, in line with the RQIA Report, is specifically calling for a single specialist Mother and Baby Unit and specialist perinatal mental health community services in every Health Trust.

Your support

We [insert Political Party name] in Northern Ireland urgently request the commitment of investment and ring-fencing of funds required to ensure women, babies, families and communities get the care and support they need and deserve.

Signed by Party Name and Logo - Party Leader name and Signature.

Thank you for your support and commitment to deliver the essential improvements to Perinatal Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland that our population deserves.

This Consensus Statement has the official support of the following Northern Ireland organisations / individuals:



**Have you seen
that girl?**

Have you seen that girl?

(Lindsay Robinson)

www.haveyouseenthathatgirl.com



Aware

www.aware-ni.org



Action Mental Health

(Amanda Jones)

www.amh.org.uk



PANGS NI

(Michelle Bradley)

www.pangsni.org



NI Maternal Mental Health Conference

**NI Maternal Mental Health Conference
& Committee**



Mums Mind NI

(Dee McConnellogue)



Moment Health

(Nuala Murphy)

www.momenthealth.io



NCT NI

(Seana Talbot)

www.nct.org.uk



NSPCC NI

www.nspcc.org.uk



Parenting NI

www.parentingni.org



Sands

www.sands.org.uk



Tiny Life

(Alison McNulty)

www.tinylife.org.uk



South Belfast Sure Start

(Joy Poots)



Mind Wise

(Edward Gorringe)

www.mindwisenv.org



TAMBA

www.tamba.org.uk



Centred Soul

www.centredsoul.co.uk



Barbardo's

(Julia Buchanan)

www.barnardos.org.uk



Association for Infant Mental Health NI (AIMHNI)

Roberta Marshall