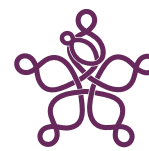


Take Action



MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE
everyone's business

Plea to PLAN The Maternal Mental Health Alliance's (MMHA) Everyone's Business campaign urges national and local decision-makers to PLAN with the mental as well as physical health needs of women and their families in mind

eBulletin • Issue 19 • Autumn 2020

#EveryonesBusiness

Maternal mental health and COVID-19: a rapid evidence review



Thanks to invaluable funding from **Comic Relief**, the Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) is busy working with member, **Centre for Mental Health**, to analyse evidence from across the sector to understand the **impact of COVID-19 on maternal mental health and services**.

A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to this work to date. Please watch this space - the final report will be shared early 2021 and your ongoing support will be vital to draw attention to the findings.

No matter what lockdown measures are in place, it is vital that women and families receive the perinatal mental health care they need. While other areas of the health service may be able to postpone or cancel some procedures if necessary, birth cannot be delayed and mums need the care of sufficiently staffed and well-supported services across the pathway. **The MMHA calls on decision makers not to redeploy these essential staff to minimise the risk of unnecessary - and at times tragic - costs.**

Women and families needed better access to specialist PMH services before the pandemic, if anything COVID has increased this need even more.



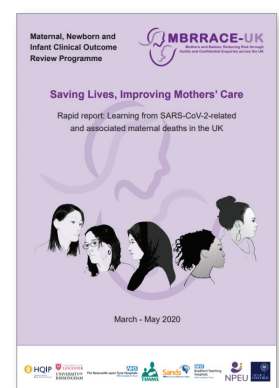
"Women we are seeing within specialist PMH services are presenting with a dramatically higher number of issues due to the pressures of Covid-19. Alongside needing support for their mental health, many women are struggling with other factors such as social isolation, housing,

and domestic abuse. Specialist PMH services play a key role in supporting mums and their families but cannot do it alone. Now, more than ever, we need other services, including maternity and health visiting, in place so there is a comprehensive system of PMH care. We need to ensure women and babies continue to be seen so we can provide safe care." Dr Hind Khalifeh Consultant Perinatal Psychiatrist (SLAM NHSFT)

MBRRACE-UK: "Perinatal mental health care is as essential as other aspects of maternity care"

The sobering results of **MBRRACE-UK's review of maternal deaths during May-August 2020** tragically showed that four women died by suicide during the UK-wide lockdown this spring.

Deaths that may have been avoided, the report stated, had these women been in "receipt of the specialist care they needed."



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NORTHERN IRELAND: Update on new model for specialist PMH community services

“Improving mental health services, including perinatal mental health, was important prior to the pandemic, but I believe it is even more relevant now.”

Spokesperson for the Department of Health (DoH)

Although overdue, the DoH have now finalised the Business Case from the Public Health Agency and are working on next steps towards sign-off.

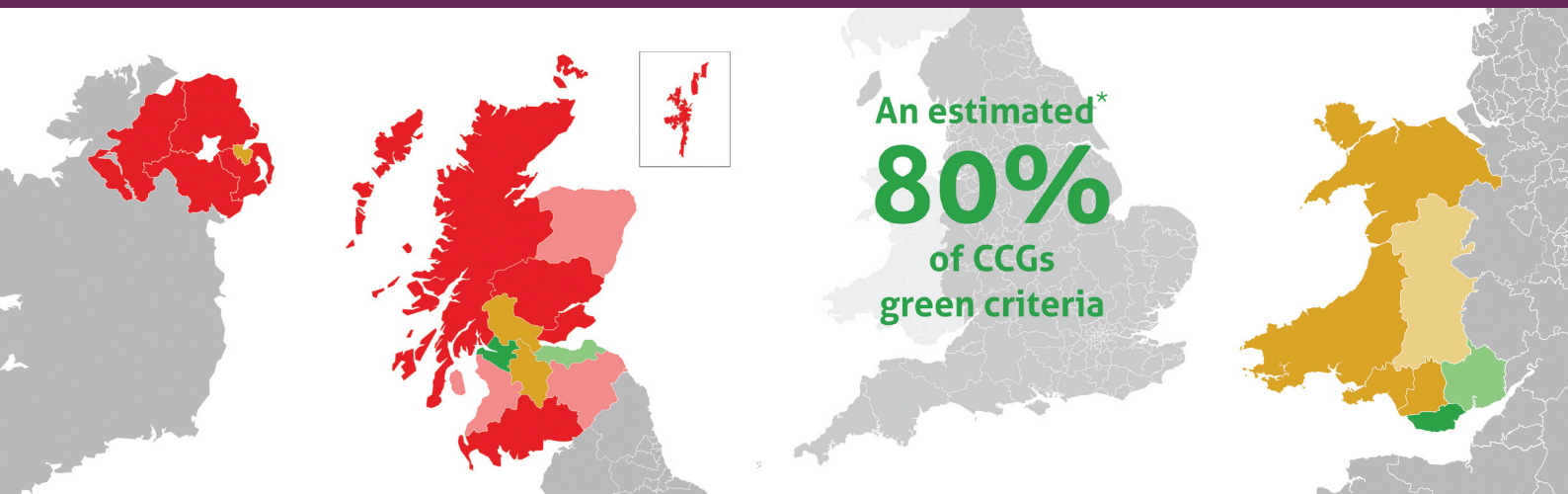
Campaigners continue to press the department for answers and swift action to provide much-needed support for women and families in need **right now**.

ENGLAND: NHS England progresses with new Maternal Mental Health Services

Advancing one of the ambitions for PMH in the **Long Term Plan**, pilot sites for new Maternal Mental Health Services (formerly Maternity Outreach Clinics) will be **announced shortly**. These services will integrate maternity, reproductive health, and psychological therapy for women experiencing mental health difficulties in the perinatal period. All areas of England should have access to these services by 2023/24.

This is a positive step forward and we will follow learnings from the pilot sites to see how they translate into PMH care for women and families in need.

MMHA's new maps show some welcome progress and commitment but more needs to be done to end the postcode lottery



Specialist services have never been more needed. Please help us **#TurnTheMapGreen**.

SCOTLAND: Efforts to upskill universal staff but services must exist to refer to

A suite of PMH e-learning modules has been developed to help clinicians working with pregnant women and new mums spot “red and amber flags” that signal preventative or immediate action must be taken.

It is encouraging to see training targeted at universal services, who are well positioned to identify women with, or at risk of, a severe perinatal mental illness and to refer them to specialists for ongoing support. But this requires all areas to offer women and families access to specialist PMH services.

We await an update on how the **£52 million previously committed** by Government will, help turn the map green for women and families.

WALES: MMHA welcomes brand new Minister for Mental Health

In a ministerial portfolio reshuffle to help strengthen the Welsh Government’s response to COVID-19 and acknowledge its long-term impact on mental wellbeing, Member of the Senedd Eluned Morgan was appointed as Minister for Mental Health (Wellbeing and Welsh language).

The new Minister’s responsibilities will include mental health services and patient experience.

The MMHA look forward to working with Eluned Morgan to ensure the impact of COVID-19 on maternal mental health is understood and the commitment to improve access to PMH services in Wales, including sufficient funding for specialist services, is realised.

MMHA embarks on exciting new chapter thanks to National Lottery funding

The National Lottery Community Fund has awarded the MMHA **new funding** to help



ensure every mother in the UK has access to the right care and support for her mental health during pregnancy and postnatally.

MMHA will maintain its focus on turning the **specialist PMH community services map** green in all four nations, an essential foundation for this vision.

In addition, we will look beyond specialist services to ensure that other important parts of maternal mental health care are available to women and families.

What's next?

The first six months of funding will focus on developing the goals of this exciting new phase of the **Everyone's Business campaign**, before a major launch next spring.

As always, the MMHA will work across **our membership** and beyond to take action that will make the biggest difference to the mental wellbeing of women and their families.

Andrea Leadsom MP leads early years review

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has asked Andrea Leadsom MP to chair **a review** looking at reducing inequalities and aiming to ensure every baby is given the best possible start in life.



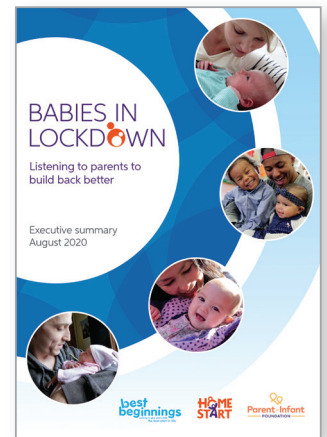
The MMHA is actively supporting Andrea Leadsom and her team with this important work. **Initial findings** from the first phase of the review are expected January 2021.

Lockdown strain on new parents' mental health and impact on babies highlighted in report from MMHA members

In August, **Best Beginnings**, **Home-Start UK** and **Parent-Infant Foundation** launched '**Babies in Lockdown**', a report exploring the impact of the pandemic and lockdown on new and expectant parents, and their babies.

The report contained grave testimony from parents across the UK, including a 32-year-old single mother from North West England who said:

"I feel lost in the world. I am mentally, psychologically and emotionally in a standstill."



Key statistics from the report:



6 in 10 parents had significant concerns about their mental health.



Only 3 in 10 were confident that they could find mental health support if they needed it.

Families already at risk of **poorer outcomes** appear to have suffered the most.



Parents **main concern** was for their emotional and mental health.

Government largely rejects maternity petition recommendations

In response to an **e-petition** calling for extended maternity leave, **Dr Alain Gregoire**, MMHA members, clinicians and parents gave evidence to the Petitions Committee. The Government's **response** to **recommendations made** as a result was, understandably, met with disappointment.



MMHA members call attention to racial disparities in maternity and maternal mental health care



In October, new MMHA member, **The Motherhood Group** launched the first-ever **Black Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week**.

"Raising awareness is just the first step. Let's continue to work together to ensure that black mothers are able to get the support they so rightly deserve and need."

Sandra Igwe, founder of The Motherhood Group

Alliance member, the **Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' (RCOG)** launched a Race Equality Taskforce. To mark the first meeting, RCOG and campaign group **Five X More** announced **'five steps for healthcare professionals'**, a campaign to help reduce maternal health disparities in the UK.

Media moments

Mother and baby units providing essential support during lockdown – BBC News

Pandemic a 'ticking time bomb' for maternal mental health in Scotland – STV, featuring former Scotland campaign coordinator Joanne Smith

Expecting alone: The isolation of pregnancy during Covid – Radio 4, featuring firsthand experiences of mums, health visitors, and reflection from Dr Alain Gregoire

Urgent call for MLAs in Northern Ireland to review maternity services during pandemic – UTV

Everyone's Business champion shares story of first pregnancy and concern about second – The Lancet

NEW PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE

Fathers Reaching Out

Longstanding MMHA supporter, **Mark Williams** has released a report with support from **DadPad** summarising 10 years of findings on the importance of fathers' mental health, including vital statistics:

The biggest killer of men under 50 in the UK is suicide, with dads experiencing mental health problems during the perinatal period up to 47 times more likely to be classed as a suicide risk than at any other time in their lives.



Fathers Reaching Out - Why Dads Matter:
10 years of findings on the importance of fathers' mental health in the perinatal period
Mark Williams - September 2020



Sponsored by **DadPad** - Developers of the Essential Guide for New Dads and the DadPad App

Visit **MMHA's resource hub** to find this report and other essential PMH resources.

MMHA team changes

Former MP and Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Luciana Berger was appointed as the **new Chair of the MMHA** and took up the post at the start of October.



We are hugely grateful to Dr Alain Gregoire for his leadership for over a decade and delighted that he will continue to support campaigning efforts and strategic conversations around PMH as our Honorary President.

A warm welcome to Sharon McPherson, who has joined the team in the brand-new role of Lived Experience Champion Network Officer.



An enormous thank you to Joanne Smith, who is sadly leaving the role of Everyone's Business Scotland Coordinator, for her fantastic contribution to the campaign these last few years. Recruitment discussions are ongoing, and we will provide an update soon.

Maternal Mental Health Alliance is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered in England and Wales (no. 1178152).

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