

Help us **Make All Care Count** for women, babies and families

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In this edition, you'll find:

- Latest MBRRACE data on maternal deaths
- Perinatal mental health news from across the UK
- Key statistics, new research and projects



Media spotlight on maternal suicide

Following the debate in Westminster, there has been fantastic media attention helping to raise awareness of maternal mental health and suicide, including:

- [BBC Breakfast](#)
- [The Guardian](#)
- [The Times](#)
- [Woman's Hour](#)
- [Grazia](#)

A catalyst for change: MPs call for better maternal mental health support

In February, Laura Kyrke-Smith MP led an important **debate on maternal mental health in Westminster Hall**, sharing the heartbreaking story of her friend Sophie, who died by suicide just 10 weeks after giving birth to her third baby. The MP for Aylesbury underscored the critical importance of making mental health a core part of maternity care.

While acknowledging progress, such as increased specialist perinatal mental health (PMH) services for complex cases, she highlighted the stark disparities in care, especially for disadvantaged women, and outlined **four key recommendations**:

- 1** Protect existing community and inpatient **specialist PMH services**
- 2** **Embed mental health support** in routine maternity care
- 3** Expand community support for maternal mental health
- 4** **Improve education and awareness** among professionals and the public

The debate was oversubscribed with a number of MPs speaking out in support, demonstrating strong cross-party commitment to improving care. The Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) thanks Laura for her dedication to shining a light on the needs of women and families and this call to action. Maternal mental health problems are treatable and improving access to prompt, integrated care as part of a women's maternity journey is vital.



Laura Kyrke-Smith MP

“With the right support in place at this crucial, pressured time in women's lives, they do surmount great mental health challenges and recover, often quickly and well... Better maternal mental health outcomes must be one test of [the Government's] success.”

Laura Kyrke-Smith MP

“We hope this spotlight will bring renewed focus to the issue of perinatal mental health. Inspiring greater understanding within families and demonstrating to decision makers that further action is needed so all women can access the right care.” Justin Irwin, CEO, MMHA

Campaign updates from across the UK

ENGLAND: What does the end of NHS England mean for PMH?

The Prime Minister's announcement that NHS England will be abolished means major changes in how the health system will be run.



As government plans to bring the NHS under direct control, increase ministerial oversight and give more control to local areas are worked out, it is essential that clear accountability for PMH remains. System changes must not risk the progress made in specialist care being lost or delay the 10-year health plan and much needed improvements in PMH care.

The MMHA will continue to collaborate and advocate to ensure that the urgent needs of women, babies, and families affected by PMH problems remain a priority. Now and in the future.

SCOTLAND: Raising members concerns with Scottish government

MMHA recently met with Kate Forbes (deputy first minister) and Maree Todd (Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport) to discuss the status of PMH services in Scotland. There is cross-government support for improving the care available and improving the outcomes for women, babies and families.

Whilst huge strides have been made in recent years across Scotland in terms of specialist service development, service provision is still uneven. The progress that has been achieved cannot be taken for granted, continued support is essential to eliminate the postcode lottery.

NORTHERN IRELAND: Continued call for movement on a mother and baby unit

Efforts to secure a much-needed Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) in Northern Ireland (NI) continue. In December 2024, the MMHA, alongside member organisations Action on Postpartum Psychosis and the Women's Resource Development Agency, met with NI Health Minister Mike Nesbitt to reinforce the urgent case for an MBU.

The discussion also covered key steps to improve PMH support, including expanding peer support and enhancing workforce training for healthcare professionals.



WALES: Putting PMH on the agenda for 2026 elections

With the Welsh election approaching, we're working to make PMH a key focus for all parties. The MMHA is collaboratively developing a clear set of policy asks to ensure it features in election manifestos and leads to real action so that, no matter who is successful, the mental health of mothers, babies, and families is a top concern.



[Read more updates from across the UK](#)

KEY STATISTICS: Maternal mental illness rates by area (England only)

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) has created the **first-ever local estimates of how common PMH conditions are in England**

For women in England who gave birth in 2019:

25.8%

experienced a PMH condition



25.3%

experienced common mental disorders (like anxiety or depression)



1.2%

had a serious mental illness, personality disorder, or eating disorder



The data shows higher rates of women affected than previously estimated, **1 in 4 women rather than 1 in 5.**

This reinforces the urgent need for sustained investment in PMH services for new and expectant mums and their families.

Rates were higher in the north

(e.g. 27.5% in the North East) compared to the south (e.g. 24.6% in the South East).



MBRRACE: Mental health still a leading cause of maternal death



This year's early release figures from MBRRACE-UK show some encouraging signs, but it is deeply concerning that mental health is still the leading cause of maternal death between 6 weeks and a year after pregnancy, accounting for **over a third (34%) of late maternal deaths** in **this reporting period** (2021-23).

While **disparities in maternal mortality between ethnic groups have narrowed slightly**, Black women are still *twice* as likely to die during or after pregnancy as white women. And mothers living in the most deprived areas continue to face nearly *double* the maternal mortality rate of those in the least deprived areas.

Improving PMH support and addressing inequalities in maternity care is a matter of life and death and must be a priority. The MMHA calls for the protection of existing **specialist PMH services**, alongside improving the availability of compassionate mental health support **across maternity care**. Urgent action is needed to tackle these disparities!

Young motherhood and mental health

NEW PROJECT: Pilgrim Trust-funded service to support young mums' in North East England

The '**Young Mums Maternal Mental Health Link Work Service**', delivered by Sunderland Counselling Service, Ways to Wellness, and the MMHA will enable timely, flexible, and relationship-based maternal mental health care for young mothers aged 16-25.

The initiative includes a dedicated Link Worker to provide tailored emotional and practical support, a peer support program, and flexible communication methods to overcome the unique barriers young mothers face. The project will also focus on gathering insights to refine service delivery and inform national policy, leveraging MMHA's extensive network to ensure lasting impact for young mothers across the UK.



“When given the right tools young mums can thrive in the face of adversity. Our children are the future and deserve healthy parents bouncing back from challenges and growing stronger.”

Raiye, MMHA Lived Experience Champion (read more)

NEW RESOURCES: Supporting young mums' mental health

Creating connections: understanding the needs of young mums

Policy makers



Young mums are at an increased risk of experiencing mental illness during and after pregnancy and teenage maternal suicide rates have increased. Given this stark reality, the MMHA and Mental Health Foundation have launched a suite of resources as part of the **Creating Connections project**, funded by the Department for Health and Social Care.

The materials raise awareness of the barriers young mums face, their mental health needs, and the importance of peer support for suicide prevention and recovery. Tailored guidance is available for VCSEs, Service Providers, Commissioners and Policy Makers.

Explore the resources and share with your networks and help ensure all young mums receive the care they need to thrive.

More media moments



“We Need New Ways To Ask Black Mums About Their Mental Health” – This Huffington Post piece was shaped by a conversation between Dr Zoe Williams, Five X More, Motivational Mums Club, and the MMHA, exploring the barriers Black mothers face in accessing PMH support.

- **Why Maternal Mental Health Needs Urgent Action** – *MMHA OpEd for Chamber UK*, highlighting the need for better integrated PMH care
- **The unspoken anxieties of new motherhood** – *The Independent*, featuring the MMHA and members PANDAS Foundation and Tommy’s
- **The Jess & Baby Elsie Story: The Price of Inadequacy** – *Hyperemesis Gravidarum and the Failure of Care, Pregnancy Sickness Support*

TACKLING INEQUALITY: MMHA celebrates start of Maternal Mental Health Councils project

April marked the official start of the MMHA’s transformative new five-year project, made possible by The National Lottery Community Fund! Through the creation of **Maternal Mental Health Councils**, the MMHA will focus on long-standing inequities in care that disproportionately impact communities facing **discrimination, poverty, trauma, and isolation**.

These community-led Councils, powered by women with lived experience, will co-design solutions to break down barriers and inform broader strategies to improve services for all families across the UK.

At a time when efforts to advance equity and inclusion are under threat, this work is more vital than ever.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Five X More is dedicated to improving Black maternal health outcomes in the UK by empowering Black women and birthing people and advocating for systemic change. Their work includes awareness campaigns, research, and resources that highlight disparities and drive action.

Recently, Five X More launched their second Black Maternity Experiences Survey, gathering crucial insights into the experiences of Black mothers and birthing people in the UK.

The first survey findings will be shared in the summer and are set to inform meaningful improvements in physical and mental health care, and ensure Black voices are central in these discussions.

Meet MMHA’s new CEOs

The MMHA is pleased to announce Nikki Wilson as the **new Chief Executive Officer**, starting in May 2025.

With over 20 years of third-sector experience, Nikki has led impactful organisations like Wings for Life UK and MMHA member **Make Birth Better**.



Her deep commitment to PMH is shaped by her lived experience of birth trauma and PTSD, and Nikki’s passion for collaboration and community-led change aligns perfectly with the **MMHA’s mission and values**.

The Alliance would like to thank Justin Irwin for his leadership during this period of transition.

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

Subscribe to the Everyone’s Business eBulletin at www.maternalmentalhealthalliance.org/campaign

