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New and expectant mums face increased mental health risks caused by the pandemic

The **'Maternal Mental Health During a Pandemic'** report commissioned by MMHA, showed clear evidence of COVID-19's impact on **perinatal mental health (PMH)**.

Hundreds of representatives from across the sector came together at a **virtual launch (WATCH here) to discuss the research** funded by **Comic Relief** and conducted by **Centre for Mental Health**.

The MMHA is calling for:

- 1 Ministers to protect and enhance services supporting PMH, including voluntary sector groups
- 2 Relevant bodies to re-assess the true level of demand considering the pandemic
- 3 Research to be commissioned on the pandemic's ongoing impact, including for women and babies of colour, and those from poorer economic backgrounds.



[WATCH: report launch event and summary of key findings](#)

Government launches plan to improve outcomes for babies and parents

In March, Andrea Leadsom MP launched the Government's **'Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days'**, including six key policy actions to ensure parents and babies get the best possible start together. Experts in perinatal and infant mental health, including many MMHA members, were a key part of the process.



"The quality and consistency of the support families get depends too much on their background and where they live... research shows we can put this right."
Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

The MMHA looks forward to seeing this plan come to fruition as soon as possible and will do all we can to support implementation of these new early years policies.

New, expectant, and bereaved mums in England to receive support from new Maternal Mental Health hubs

Starting with 10 pilot starts opening over the next few months, the hubs will develop into:

- **26 hubs** across England
- **Around 6,000 more women** set to receive help
- Maternity services, reproductive health and psychological therapy **all under one roof**
- Providing **PMH training** for maternity staff and midwives.

The MMHA welcomes this positive step towards improving access to PMH support, as set-out in NHS England's **Long-Term Plan**, and the role these services can play in **upskilling the workforce**.



[LISTEN: Dr Alain Gregoire discusses maternal mental health hubs on BBC Woman's Hour](#)



WALES

New interim MBU opens its doors

Wales has been without a Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) since 2013. However, **interim Uned Gobaith is now officially open** for referrals. The MMHA welcomes this encouraging development. However, we must ensure:

1. Women and babies in North Wales have an accessible MBU option.
2. Learnings from this interim unit translate into a permanent solution for families.



"Further work is needed to ensure that provision is also made available for mothers who live in North Wales."

Eluned Morgan, Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Welsh Language

It is crucial that the new Welsh Government makes PMH a priority and lays out a clear roadmap for permanent inpatient services for women and families across Wales.

ENGLAND

Westminster Hall Debate places important spotlight on PMH

A recent debate, initiated by Sarah Olney MP, highlighted the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on maternal mental health, and the vital services providing PMH care. Many thanks to all MPs who contributed and championed the needs of women and families.



"Maternal mental health should be among our principal concerns."

Sarah Olney MP

NORTHERN IRELAND

Recruitment begins for newly funded specialist PMH services



In January, **Health Minister, Robin Swann, approved funding** for the development of specialist PMH teams in each trust. Recruitment is now underway in the hopes of services being introduced later this year and fully operational by 2022.

"Some of the darkest and most difficult days of my life would have been transformed had access to these services been available, I know personally the difference they can and will make."



Lindsay Robinson, founder of MMHA member organisation **Have you seen that girl?**

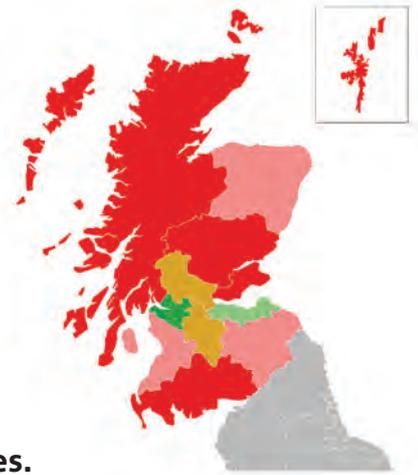
There is still a journey ahead, and we continue to campaign for a MBU, but we are delighted to be one step closer to **turning the map green** for women and families in Northern Ireland.

SCOTLAND

How has the £52m for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (PIMH) been spent?

For the first time, health boards will report on how they've allocated the **£52m for PIMH**. This data will help us understand how specialist services are developing and whether **gaps remain**.

Check the MMHA website for updates.



Services supporting maternal mental health must hear the voices of black and brown women

Clotilde Rebecca Abe (founder and CEO of **Prosperity** and Co-founder of **Five X More**) shares why she was not surprised by the findings of the **'Maternal Mental Health During a Pandemic' report**, which showed that women of colour and women from poorer economic backgrounds were more likely to experience mental health problems during and after pregnancy.



READ: guest blog by Clotilde Rebecca Abe

Key statistics

New survey figures from **NCT's Hidden Half campaign** one year on showed:

25%



were **not asked about their emotional or mental health** at their six-week GP check-up

Only 15%



had an appointment that was **focused on their own health and wellbeing**



A quarter

(25%) still **don't feel comfortable talking openly** at GP appointments about a physical or mental health problem

It is our hope that as we emerge from the crisis, every opportunity will be taken to ask women about their mental health and tackle the stigma around PMH.

Supporting women with PMH problems requires comprehensive quality care

View from an expert by experience

"When I became unwell after the birth of my daughter, I needed to speak to other women who were feeling the way I was. My family and friends were incredibly supportive, but unless you've been there yourself it can be difficult to understand and help someone with PMH problems. I really struggled to find the peer support I needed, so I set up my own group.

"We need to invest heavily in PMH services, particularly grassroots organisations who can offer parents immediate access to support."

Michelle, mum from Belfast and founder of MMHA member, **The Parent Rooms** (formerly We Are Pangs)



View from a specialist PMH midwife

"My health board is the largest in Wales, both in terms of geographical area and birth rate. The team I work in aims not only to provide direct care to women with moderate to severe PMH problems, but also to support other professionals in their roles. To help us, I recently implemented the role of 'PMH Champions', a group of individuals with an interest and passion for improving care for women and families. Their purpose is to raise awareness, reduce stigma, support colleagues and improve consistency and dissemination of PMH information."

Emma Adamson, Specialist PMH midwife, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board



Media moments



WATCH: Author Catherine Cho shares her experience of postpartum psychosis and being pregnant again in the pandemic



More mental health support for new and expectant mothers in England – BBC

Pregnant women and new mothers 'three times as likely' to suffer poor mental health in pandemic – The Independent

After Covid, we need action to protect mental health of new mothers, op-ed by MMHA Chair Luciana Berger – The Times

Services supporting the mental health of new and soon-to-be mums under serious strain – MMHA guest blog by Dr Hind Khalifeh

The evolution of the Everyone's Business campaign: specialist services and beyond

The pandemic has placed additional challenges on new and expectant mums and the services supporting them. It is clearer than ever that women and families need access to comprehensive PMH care, including and beyond specialist PMH provision.

Our next phase of work is launching soon.

Please look out for further details and support this exciting next chapter, making all care count towards better maternal mental health for women and families.



New faces in the MMHA team

Carrie Hammond, Senior Team Assistant, brings more than 10 years' experience of providing admin support and has spent time as a Bereavement Support Volunteer.



Rebecca Sheppard, Development and Programmes Manager, has over sixteen years' experience in fundraising, marketing, and communications for a variety of charities.

Laura Bennison, Scotland Everyone's Business Co-ordinator, brings her experience in audience and partnership development and 5+ years of campaigning for women's services in Scotland.



Meet the whole team.

MMHA member Spotlight



Unite the Union has 1.4 million members, including over 100,000 who work in the UK health sector, and professional associations representing groups working with women during pregnancy and the first postnatal year.

In support of the Everyone's Business campaign and "to shine a light on the particular problems faced by mothers and the people around them", Unite the Union produced a **special PMH edition of their quarterly Mental Health Nursing journal**.



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



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