

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

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## IN THIS EDITION

of the Everyone's Business campaign eBulletin, you'll:

- Learn about new research into the perinatal workforce.
- Find updates on the UK perinatal mental health landscape.
- Discover new resources to help support pregnant asylum seekers.



## Parity between mental and physical health is fundamental to getting it right for women, babies, and families

By Laura Seebohm, CEO of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA)

In recent months there have been various new consultations and taskforces announced focusing on women's health in England, Scotland and Wales. The publication of England's **Women's Health Strategy** and the appointment of Lesley Regan as Women's Health Ambassador are important milestones in addressing the health inequalities women face.

The consultations and strategies are welcome, however, too often there is scarce mention of mental health let alone perinatal mental health (PMH) and a concerning lack of any detail when it comes to actions to address the issues. This is, to put it mildly, disappointing, especially as the past 2 years have

highlighted the vital importance of good mental health for everybody.

Since joining the MMHA, I've been blown away by the incredible commitment of the PMH sector. But the recent gaps in policy documents are a reminder to us all that, despite so much progress over the past 10 years, the case for PMH still needs to be made. It cannot be seen as an 'added luxury' but an essential element of care.

With a new Prime Minister and Cabinet in England, there is a crucial opportunity for the voices of women and families to be truly listened to. The Government needs to ensure PMH is given the investment and attention it deserves.

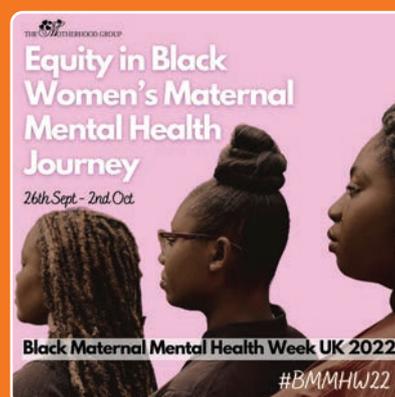
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The MMHA was saddened to hear of The Queen's death on Thursday 8 September. We send heartfelt condolences to the entire Royal Family and Royal Household at this time.

## AWARENESS: Third annual Black Maternal Mental Health Week (BMMHW) is fast approaching

Separate research from **Five X More** and **Birthrights** shows that black and brown women consistently don't feel listened to in the perinatal period. **BMMHW** is an important opportunity to hear women's stories, recognise disparities in care, share resources, and raise awareness of cultural barriers. [Be part of the conversation >](#)



“ We need to make sure we are an integral part of the solution. The many women who have suffered in the past must be at the heart of addressing racial disparities in pre and postnatal healthcare as soon as possible. ”

Sandra Igwe, Lived Experience Champion, BMMHW leader, and founder of The Motherhood Group

## WALES: Celebrating a year of hope and calling for it to continue



In July, the **MMHA co-hosted a webinar** with NSPCC and Swansea Bay University Health Board to mark one year since Uned Gobaith, the interim Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) in South Wales, opened. Speakers, including those with lived experience, recognised the real difference it has made to women and families and the Government made a welcome statement that PMH will remain a priority in the upcoming Welsh Mental Health Strategy.

**We look forward to the Unit's official 12-month review (due imminently) and are urgently seeking clarity on a clear timeline for the delivery of an MBU option for families in north Wales. It's been six years since Welsh Government first committed to making this a reality. We are concerned it is taking far too long.**

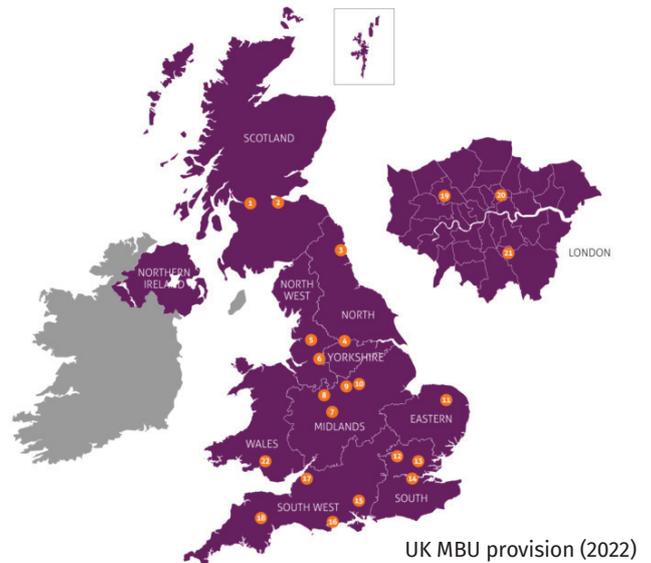
**“ I do believe my recovery would have been a lot smoother if an MBU had been closer to home. I felt horrifically isolated being so far away from my husband and son and everyone I knew. I was so pleased when Uned Gobaith opened. It will make a huge difference to expectant and new mums, and their families. It definitely would have made a huge difference to me. ”**

Toni, Lived Experience Champion and mum of two

## SCOTLAND: Next steps for consultation on MBU availability

**Analysis of responses** to a consultation on increasing MBU capacity has been released, demonstrating strong support for beds in the North East, but also concerns surrounding cost and service sustainability. A full options appraisal is due by spring 2023. We continue to monitor the decision-making process and highlight the need for equity of access to specialist services across Scotland.

The **Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy** consultation closed on 9 September. We continue to monitor the decision-making process, push for clear next steps, and make a case for equitable access to specialist PMH services across Scotland.



## NORTHERN IRELAND: APP volunteer demands MBU equity

Mums needing inpatient support shouldn't be separated from their babies. Yet, Northern Ireland remains the only nation without MBU beds. Oorlagh Quinn, representative for MMHA member **Action on Postpartum Psychosis (APP)**, **says this isn't good enough**. Action is needed now to ensure this essential service is commissioned and mothers' lives are saved!

## KEY STATISTICS: domestic abuse and the perinatal period

Greater acknowledgment of how domestic abuse can affect PMH, a woman's ability to access support, and how this can be compounded by intersectionality is needed. In November, the MMHA is holding a roundtable, chaired by Professor Louise Howard, to support the conversation about what is needed and how the MMHA might help to raise awareness. More on this to come.



**1 in 4 women in the UK will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime**



**Women who experience domestic abuse are twice as likely to suffer depression**



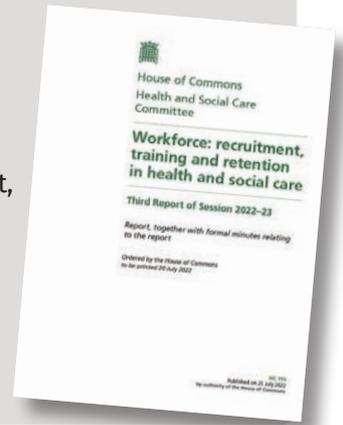
**Nearly a third of domestic abuse begins during pregnancy**

**New MMHA member, Refuge, reports that around 20% of women in their services are pregnant or have recently given birth**

## Select Committee calls for urgent action to tackle NHS England workforce shortages

A **new report from the Health and Social Care Committee** states that NHS England is dangerously short staffed, citing midwifery as a particular concern. According to the report, persistent understaffing now poses a serious risk to the safety of staff and patients.

A confident, well-equipped workforce is essential to delivering high-quality PMH care for all women, babies, and families. This report adds to growing evidence, including from MMHA members, demonstrating the impact of the workforce crisis and why a long-term plan to address staffing issues is urgently needed.



## Joint MMHA & RCM statement highlights midwives' vital role in good PMH care

Midwives can play a crucial role supporting the PMH needs of new and expectant mothers during routine contacts. For maternal mental health to be given the same priority as physical health and to deliver the level of care needed, increased commitment and funding are required. In a **joint statement**, the MMHA and RCM outlined three key recommendations to improve services, including:

- 1 Investing in targeted services for women.**
- 2 More mental health training for midwives and other frontline staff.**
- 3 More specialist mental health roles in maternity.**



“For too long the mental health of women in and around pregnancy has lacked the attention and resources needed to tackle this serious problem.”

Gill Walton, CEO of the Royal College of Midwives

## Research shows why health visitors matter

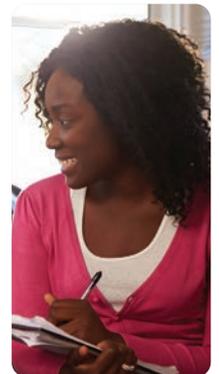
“I feel really worried for new parents who may struggle now health visiting clinics and drop-ins are being cut due to lack of funding, and, in a world where parents have to pick up a phone and initiate the support, I believe many won't!”

Leanne, Lived Experience Champion and mum of two

According to the **State of Health Visiting Annual Survey** (iHV, 2021), a staggering **81% of health visitors have seen an increase in PMH problems.**

A **report** from the First 1001 Days Movement, which includes articles from the MMHA, as well as testimony from parents and professionals, helps demonstrate the importance of health visitors for supporting PMH and the needs of the whole family.

The essential role maternity and health visiting services play in supporting women and families was highlighted in a recent **economic report** commissioned by the MMHA. This research showed that integrating PMH support into these services could help improve lives and have a net economic benefit of nearly half a billion pounds.



## Media moments

**Health Visitors need more resources to deliver face-to-face contacts say MPs** – Nursing Practice

**Mental health support struggling to cope with needs of pregnant mothers and new parents** – Sky News, featuring MMHA member PANDAS

**Mum diagnosed with postpartum psychosis after birth calls for NI's first Mother and Baby Unit** – ITV

**New mums being failed by devastating issue that impacts 1,400 women a year** – Sunday Mirror, featuring MMHA Honorary President Dr Alain Gregoire and member Action on Postpartum Psychosis discussing the need for accessible MBU beds across the UK

## ESSENTIAL READING: new resources to support pregnant asylum-seeking women

“Keep advocating and making people aware of what maternal mental health means... I know most of us in our country, we don't really care about mental health when you're pregnant.”

Fatima, Lived Experience Champion, asylum seeker and mum of two. [Hear more >](#)

To help health professionals meet the specific needs of pregnant asylum seekers and understand the barriers they face to support, MMHA member, Refugee Women Connect has released [a suite of resources](#). Developed by women with experience of giving birth in the UK asylum system, the videos and digital guides are aimed at pregnant women as well as the health care professionals providing their care. Please share widely.



[Visit the MMHA Resource Hub for more →](#)

## Our Royal Patron



During Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week in May, the MMHA was [honoured to announce HRH The Princess of Wales as Royal Patron](#).

The Princess' longstanding dedication to the Early Years and keen interest in mental health marry beautifully with the Alliance's mission to ensure every mum, baby and family affected by PMH problems can access the right care and support.

**We look forward to working together.**

## Team update

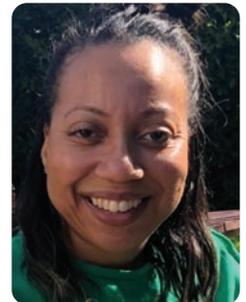
**We are delighted to introduce you to our new staff and board members:**

Senior Campaign Assistant, **Toni Woodman**, worked in training and development for 10 years before spending 5 years with Home-Start, supporting parents with diagnosed mental health conditions.



**Holly Latham**, Lived Experience Champion Network Officer, is new to the charity sector having worked for the last 9 years as a mental health nurse.

New MMHA trustee, **Lisa Williams**, is a proud mum of two boys with experience in governance, HR, and business support. She volunteers to support families experiencing domestic abuse and believes in diverse representation and listening to all perspectives.



**Sakina Ballard** brings lived and learned experience of PMH to the MMHA Board. She is a therapeutically trained coach, mentor, and trauma-informed antenatal educator with a passion for facilitating voices to be heard.

And finally, **Yasmin Mulji**, is a specialist registrar in obstetrics and gynaecology, practising in London. She is committed to resolving healthcare inequalities, particularly those experienced by women due to their ethnicity or socioeconomic background.



[Read the Board's reflections on the new approach they used for trustee recruitment and what they learnt along the way.](#)

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

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