

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

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This edition of the eBulletin contains roundups of particularly hard-hitting research findings from across the sector. This evidence must compel us all to act. However, it is also important to hold onto hope because these issues are being brought to the fore, thanks to the dedication and passion of the perinatal mental health (PMH) community, including MMHA members, as well as allies in media and academia. **Together, we will continue to champion the needs of all women, babies, and families, tackle the inequities and injustices outlined here and create positive change.**

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

## 83% of health visitors report an increase in PMH problems

The Institute of Health Visiting's (iHV) **annual survey** paints a worrying picture of the rising needs of women, babies and families and mounting pressures on the workforce.

Alongside an increase in PMH problems:

- 91% of health visitors reported an increase in poverty affecting families over the past 12 months.
- 75% reported an increase in domestic abuse.
- 50% of the workforce is considering leaving the profession.

Health visitors can play a crucial role in improving outcomes for families impacted by PMH problems, but they can only do so with adequate support and resources.

**Visit iHV's website for recommendations about what needs to be addressed and how >**



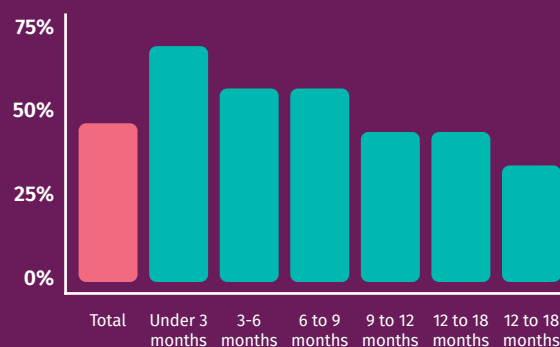
### IN THIS EDITION

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

- MBRRACE findings
- Devolved nation updates
- Domestic abuse and the impact on perinatal mental health
- Response to 10 Year Mental Health Plan being withdrawn
- Remembering Dr Margaret Oates OBE

### SPOTLIGHT: The cost of living crisis and maternal mental health

Per cent listing cost of living as a factor affecting their mental health during/after pregnancy, by age of youngest child.



Source: Deltapoll survey of 500 women (Sep 2022), commissioned by the MMHA

A recent poll of 500 mothers commissioned by the MMHA found that 72% of women who had given birth in the past three months reported that cost of living concerns had negatively affected their mental health compared with just 30% of those who had a baby 18-24 months ago.

The correlation between the likelihood of a woman dying in the weeks before and after childbirth and high levels of deprivation (MBRRACE 2022) makes the rising cost of living and its impact on maternal mental health, a real cause for concern and needs urgent attention.

# KEY STATISTICS: The number of mental health-related maternal deaths is increasing

## The latest MBRRACE Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths revealed deeply tragic findings:

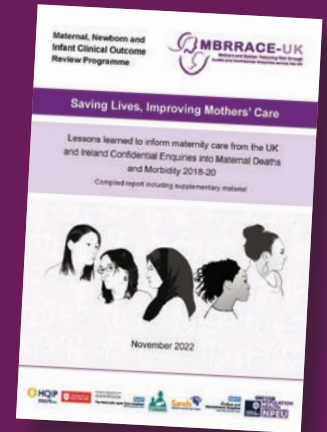
- Suicide remains the leading cause of direct maternal death in the first postnatal year.
- Suicide during or six weeks after pregnancy is increasing.
- 40% of deaths within the year after pregnancy were from mental health-related causes.

Very few women who died by suicide in 2020 had formal mental health diagnoses, but a significant number had a history of trauma.

With 1 in 9 women who died experiencing multiple disadvantages, it's clear that the most vulnerable continue to be missed and overshadowed by bias and barriers to care.

Embedding an understanding of discrimination and trauma across our perinatal services could transform lives for generations to come.

The impact of deprivation, discrimination and trauma is undeniable. This report and the heart-breaking loss of lives should be an urgent rallying call for change.



## WALES: Work begins on new mental health strategy

The Welsh Government has shared plans to launch a consultation as it develops a new mental health strategy.

To help ensure that it delivers for women, babies, and families, the MMHA are joining forces with the PMH Network and key partners to facilitate several workshops to help identify key recommendations and strategic objectives for the Welsh Government.

Keep an eye on [Twitter](#) for information on how you can get involved.



“I can assure you that perinatal mental health will continue to be a priority in the next strategy.”

Lynne Neagle, Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

## COMING SOON:

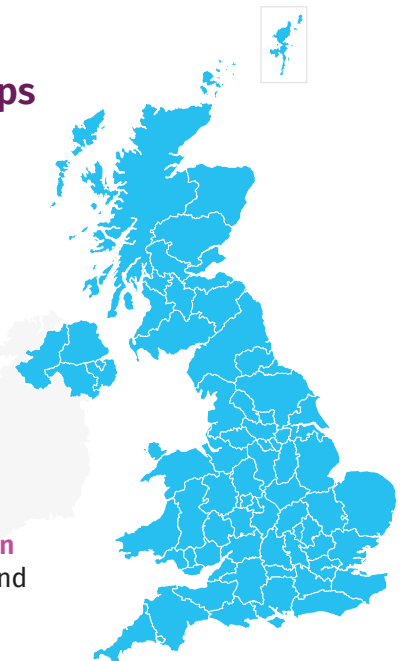
### New campaign maps showing status of postcode lottery

We are collecting data to update our hugely powerful maps showing levels of specialist PMH service provision.

For the first time ever, we will also be looking at:

- 1 Progress with **NHS Long Term Plan** ambitions in England
- 2 Levels of funding.

These maps will be invaluable for showing the expansion in specialist PMH services, the gaps that still exist, and the continued work that needs to happen so women, babies, and families across the UK can access this lifesaving, essential care. More details soon...



## SCOTLAND: Programme Board updates on service development

The Perinatal and infant mental health (PIMH) Board's latest update outlined their assessment of PIMH provision across all health boards. Our upcoming maps will chart the progress of specialist PMH services against **UK wide standards**, and we look forward to discussing improvements and gaps in care soon.

### Much needed funding for voluntary sector

The vital role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) has been recognised with the extension of the **PIMH fund**. Sustainability is essential to the VCS, and this continued financial support is welcome.

“The third sector plays a key role in access to perinatal mental health support, and with the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and the cost crisis, their work is more important now than ever.”

Kevin Stewart, Mental Wellbeing Minister





## SPOTLIGHT: Domestic abuse and PMH

In November, the MMHA hosted an online meeting chaired by Professor Louise Howard and attended by VAWG specialists, academics, and health professionals.

We will continue to explore how best to raise awareness, showcase best practices, and improve policies and systems for women and babies experiencing domestic abuse in the perinatal period.

[Read our briefing for key learning points →](#)

## NORTHERN IRELAND: Still no clear plan for a Mother and Baby Unit (MBU)

An updated strategic outline from the Department of Health is due at the end of March 2023 when we hope there will be further details of how the establishment of an MBU in Northern Ireland is progressing.

Uncertainty about funding beyond year 1 of the mental health strategy and the lack of an Executive are causing considerable delays and we are concerned that currently there is no timescale confirmed for an MBU.

Each Trust is slowly establishing specialist PMH community teams, and it is essential they have an MBU to refer women and babies to, when they need inpatient care. **Northern Ireland is the only nation without an MBU – this needs to change urgently!**

## ENGLAND: Government's 10 Year Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan withdrawn

The cross-government Mental Health Plan has been replaced with a proposed major conditions strategy, in which mental health is one area. Given the increased level of PMH need and the pressures on the system, this is disappointing news.

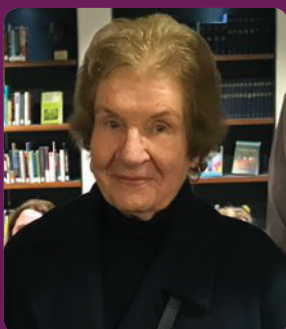
We will continue to make the case for women, babies and families who need coordinated Government commitment and *action* more than ever.

## ROYAL VISIT: Showcasing the benefit of joined-up perinatal mental healthcare



In November, our royal patron, Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales met with MMHA staff, members **Home-Start** and **Birth Companions**, mums and babies, and clinicians from across multi-disciplinary perinatal services in Hillingdon, London.

The Princess learnt about the difference individualised PMH care can make, and why the Alliance is calling for all mums, babies, and families to be able to access compassionate and comprehensive PMH care that meets their unique needs.



## Remembering Dr Margaret Oates OBE

In January, the MMHA joined the PMH community in mourning the loss of pioneering and inspirational perinatal psychiatrist, Dr Margaret Oates OBE.

**“Her vision was revolutionary... However, her greatest legacy is that the lives of women with maternal mental illness, and that of their babies and families, would be much the poorer and, in many cases, mired in tragedy, were it not for her ceaseless work on their behalf.”** [Read Dr Cantwell's tribute in full on our website.](#)



## ESSENTIAL READING: New resources from MMHA members



### Celebrating 10 years of Maternal OCD

This **anniversary guide** is for women and families impacted by perinatal OCD and the professionals working with them. The guide includes resources to help with recovery and insights from parents and clinicians – all in the spirit that, with the right support, recovery from perinatal OCD is possible.

### Tommy's Miscarriage Support Tool

The **Tommy's Miscarriage Support Tool** is designed to provide hope and reassurance to pregnant people who have a history of one or more miscarriages and offers tailored guidance based on their individual experience.

[Visit the MMHA Hub for more PMH resources >](#)

## Media moments

Spotlight on perinatal OCD, featuring an interview with new Champion Natalie and MMHA research - BBC Look North

Poverty in UK could increase death rates during or after pregnancy, warns WHO – The Guardian, featuring the MMHA and member organisation Action on Postpartum Psychosis (APP)

NI Health Minister urged to set up MBU – BBC



**National Perinatal  
Mental Health  
Conference 2023**

Wednesday 1 March 2023, 9am–4.30pm  
Only online tickets left. Don't miss out!

**BOOK  
HERE**

**NEW**

## MMHA's strategic priorities 2023-26



We are excited to share **MMHA's new strategy**.

Thanks to a collaborative approach rooted – as our work always is – in lived and learned experience, we have a clear direction of travel for the next three years.

Together, the Alliance will focus on:

- Reaching ALL women
- Raising awareness
- Excellent services – Specialist and Universal
- Listening to women, babies, and families

**Here's to an ambitious and exciting few years ahead!**



### MEMBER UPDATE: UNICEF UK

**1 in 3 parents are struggling to access support, including for their mental health.**



And local services, such as health visitor appointments, aren't always available when needed most.

So MMHA member, **UNICEF UK** has launched a new campaign calling on the UK Government to deliver a National Baby and Toddler Guarantee setting out basic services that every young child and family are entitled to. [Find out more →](#)

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

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