

## Support Guide for Perinatal Mental Health

Pregnancy is often a very happy and exciting time. But not everyone feels this way. You may have mixed, or even negative, feelings about being pregnant. You may find it more difficult than others to cope with the changes and uncertainties which pregnancy brings. Many things can affect how you feel in pregnancy. These include physical symptoms (e.g. morning sickness), the support you have (or do not have), and stressful events in your life.

People often worry about how they will cope with pregnancy or having a baby. It is normal to feel stressed or anxious at times. When you are pregnant, it is common to worry about:

- The changes in your role (becoming a mother/parent, stopping work)
- The changes in your relationships
- Whether you will be a good parent
- Fear that there will be problems with the pregnancy or the baby
- Physical health problems and pregnancy complications
- Fear of childbirth
- Lack of support and being alone

As many as 1 in 5 people giving birth and 1 in 10 partners have mental health problems in pregnancy or after birth. It can happen to anyone. Depression and anxiety are the most common mental health problems in pregnancy. Just like at other times in life, you can have many different types of mental illness and the severity can vary. You may already have had a mental illness when you became pregnant.

Mental health problems you have had in the past can be worrying because they can increase the risk of becoming unwell, particularly after birth. However, with the right help this can often be prevented. You can also develop mental health problems for the first time in pregnancy or after birth.

How your mental health is affected during pregnancy depends on many things. These include:

- The type of mental illness you have had already
- Stopping medication for a mental health problem - you have a high risk of relapse if you do this when you become pregnant. This is more likely if you have had a severe illness, several episodes of illness or a recent episode
- Recent stressful events in your life (such as a death in the family or a relationship ending)
- How you feel about your pregnancy - you may or may not be happy about being pregnant
- Upsetting memories about difficulties in your own childhood

## Symptoms

Symptoms of mental illness in pregnancy are like symptoms you may have at other times, but some may focus on the pregnancy. For instance, you may have anxious or negative thoughts about your pregnancy or your baby. You may find changes in your weight and shape difficult, particularly if you have had an eating disorder.

Sometimes symptoms caused by your pregnancy can be confused with symptoms of mental illness. For example, broken sleep and lack of energy are common in both pregnancy and depression.

Following the birth of baby, it is common to experience a range of emotions. Many people can feel tearful due to hormones, tiredness and all the adjustments that come with a new baby. These amplified emotions are common especially around day 2-3 and may continue for a short while.

If you experience low mood or a decline in your mental health, especially one that lasts longer than two weeks it is always best to reach out and tell someone. There are many forms of support available and a wide range of professionals to help you find the most appropriate treatment.

**Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust (BHT) are committed to supporting mental health. We understand it is common for people who are pregnant and partners to experience:**

- Low mood, sadness and tearfulness
- Anxiety, OCD, worry and tension
- Irritability and anger
- Difficult or unexpected feelings towards your pregnancy or baby
- Poor sleep even when your baby sleeps well
- Feeling unable to cope or enjoy anything
- Thoughts that you are not a good enough parent
- Worrying thoughts about your baby
- Relationship and social stress, such as housing, financial or relationship issues.
- Anxiety about labour or struggling to come to terms with a difficult birth

## Asking for help

It can be difficult to talk about how you are feeling and to ask for help. Struggling emotionally at this time can happen to anyone, especially after any big life change like welcoming a new member to the family. Asking for help **does not** mean you cannot cope or are not able to care for your child. It is the start of getting the right help and support to ensure you can be the parent you want to be.

## Where to find support

### BHT Maternity service

To make sure you have the right support for you, please tell your midwife or obstetrician if you, or a close member of your family, has current or past mental health issues, or feel your mental health is declining. They can refer you to our dedicated Perinatal Wellbeing team for enhanced support during pregnancy and up to 28 days after your baby is born. You can also self-refer to the team's specialist midwives at [bht.perinatalmentalhealth@nhs.net](mailto:bht.perinatalmentalhealth@nhs.net).



**It is important that you attend your antenatal appointments during pregnancy to ensure you have all the care and support you need.**

### **BHT Perinatal Wellbeing Team**

Our specialist perinatal midwives, obstetricians and maternity support workers will advocate for you and can provide non-judgemental conversational support, medication reviews, referrals and personalised maternity care plans at any stage of your journey.



### **BHT Health Visitor**

Our Health visitors see all women with new babies usually 5-9 days following the birth of your baby. They offer advice about your baby's health, feeding, sleep and other issues. In Bucks, health visitors may see you even before your baby is born. Your health visitor will ask you about your mental health. They can support you and refer you to other services for support and treatment if you need it. Tell your health visitor how you are feeling and request support.



### **GP**

You should talk to your GP if you are worried about mental health problems in pregnancy. Your GP can provide information, advice and treatment. They can refer you to a perinatal mental health or psychological therapies service if needed.

### **NHS 111**

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can help if you have an urgent health concern and you are not sure what to do. **Telephone 111**

### **Birth Reflections**

If you would like to speak to someone in confidence about your birth experience. Call the birth reflections team on **01296 255760** [www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk/birthchoices/following-birth.htm](http://www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk/birthchoices/following-birth.htm).



### **Buckinghamshire Community Eating Disorders Team**

Offer community support, psychological assessment and therapy, dietetic advice, support and monitoring, and can help with shopping and meal planning. Healthcare professionals can make a referral for you to this service on **01865 901091**

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/cotswoldhouse/refer/bucks](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/cotswoldhouse/refer/bucks).



## Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

A free local service offering short-term therapy to give you space to talk and may include guided self-help sessions with a therapist, cognitive behaviour therapy, couples therapy and counselling.

Partners of people who are pregnant can refer themselves to these services too. Remember to mention on your self-referral about your baby as this will prioritise your referral. Choose the IAPT service in the same area as your registered GP.



## Buckinghamshire IAPT - Healthy Minds

Self-refer on **01865901600** or online at [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/healthyminds](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/healthyminds).

Healthy Minds also work with the Health Visiting Team to offer a Postnatal Wellbeing Support Group. A 10-week course based on CBT strategies to help manage postnatal anxiety and depression.

## Out of Area IAPT Services

### Bedfordshire Wellbeing Service

Self-refer on **01234 880 400** or online at [www.bedfordshirewellbeing.nhs.uk](http://www.bedfordshirewellbeing.nhs.uk).



### Berkshire Talking Therapies

Self-refer on **0300 365 2000** or online [www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health-and-wellbeing/talking-therapies-berkshire](http://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health-and-wellbeing/talking-therapies-berkshire).



### Hertfordshire Wellbeing Service

Call **0800 6444 101** or online at

[www.hpft.nhs.uk/services/community-services/wellbeing-service](http://www.hpft.nhs.uk/services/community-services/wellbeing-service).



### Oxfordshire - Talking Space Plus

Self-refer on **01865 901 222** or online at [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/talkingspaceplus](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/talkingspaceplus).



## Who to call in a crisis?

### The Crisis team

A rapid response service, providing immediate support alongside the Perinatal Mental Health specialist team. They will accept calls from you, your partner or someone concerned for your immediate mental health. **Telephone 01865 902000**

**Emergency response call 999** in a medical emergency when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. Once you are connected to a call handler, you'll have to answer a series of questions to establish what's wrong, such as:

- *Where are you (including the area or postcode)?*
- *What phone number are you calling from?*
- *What has happened?*

### Perinatal Mental Health Specialist Team

An award-winning service for mothers and birthing individuals in Buckinghamshire experiencing severe mental health difficulties. Healthcare professionals can make a referral for you: **01865 901749** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/buckinghamshire-perinatal-mental-health-service](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/buckinghamshire-perinatal-mental-health-service).



### Samaritans

24 hours a day, every day. **Telephone 116 123** [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org).



### Shout 85258

A free, confidential, anonymous text support service available 24/7. If you need immediate support, you can text **SHOUT to 85258** anytime day or night and chat by text to share what is worrying you. [www.giveusashout.org](http://www.giveusashout.org).



### The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

Anyone can hit crisis point. CALM run a free and confidential helpline and webchat – 7 hours a day, 7 days a week for anyone who needs to talk about life's problems. [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net).



## Living with Stress

### Women's Aid

If you are experiencing any form of abuse or need advice, they are here to help you. **Call 0808 2000 247** [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)



### Refuge

Freephone, 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline **0808 2000 247** [www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk).



### P3 Charity

Advice and support for housing, homelessness, education, employment, finance and benefits, debt, sexual health and relationships. [www.p3charity.org](http://www.p3charity.org).



### Citizens Advice

We can all face problems that seem complicated or intimidating. Citizens Advice believe no one should have to face these problems without good quality, independent advice. **Tel: 0800 144 8848** [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk).



### Live Well Stay Well

A free service helping people to lose weight, quit smoking, get more active, feel happier or manage their diabetes and the emotional challenges of managing long-term conditions. **Tel: 01628 857 311** [www.livewellstaywellbucks.co.uk/](http://www.livewellstaywellbucks.co.uk/).



## Additional support

**Buckinghamshire Mind:** Advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. runs a wide range of services Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire for children, young people and adults affected by mental health problems. Contact **01494 463364** or online at [www.bucksmind.org.uk](http://www.bucksmind.org.uk).



**DadPad:** As a new dad or non-birthing partner you will likely feel excited, but you may also feel left out, unsure or overwhelmed. The DadPad can help by giving you the knowledge and practical skills that you need. This resource can support you and your partner to give your baby the best possible start in life. [www.thedadpad.co.uk](http://www.thedadpad.co.uk).



**Mental Health Mates:** Offers peer support, run by people who experience their own mental health issues. Together they meet regularly online, go on local walks, connect and share without fear or judgement. [www.mentalhealthmates.co.uk](http://www.mentalhealthmates.co.uk).



**OCD Action:** Provides information and support to people affected by obsessive-compulsive disorder and related disorders. Contact **0845 390 6232** [www.ocdaction.org.uk](http://www.ocdaction.org.uk).



**PANDAs Foundation:** A postnatal support community offering peer-to-peer support for you, your family and every parent or network affected by perinatal mental illness. Contact **0808 1961 776** or online at [www.pandasfoundation.org.uk](http://www.pandasfoundation.org.uk).



**Queer Parenting Partnership:** A collection of LGBTQ-identified birth and postpartum professionals who work together to support LGBTQ families during family building and early parenting. [www.parentingqueer.co.uk](http://www.parentingqueer.co.uk).



### Division of Women, Children & Sexual Health Services

## How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention and control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention and control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming into and after leaving the ward. In some situations, hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser as hand sanitisers are not suitable for use when dealing with patients who have symptoms of diarrhoea.

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email [bht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:bht.pals@nhs.net)

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