

Mental Health Awareness Week 9th-15th May 2022: Connection is Key

This week is Maternal Mental Health Awareness week, a campaign organised and led by the Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) member of the Perinatal Mental Health Partnership UK and is designed to raise public and professional awareness of perinatal mental health problems. MMHA is a UK-wide charity which works collaboratively with health professionals and families to bring care to those affected by perinatal mental health problems.

12 May 2022

This week is Mental Health Awareness Week- the UK's national week raising awareness of the issues surrounding mental health and hosted by the Mental Health Foundation. This follows last week's Maternal Health Awareness Week, a campaign organised and led by the Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) member of the [Perinatal Mental Health Partnership UK](#) and is designed to raise public and professional awareness of perinatal mental health problems. MMHA is a UK-wide charity which works collaboratively with health professionals and families to bring care to those affected by perinatal mental health problems.

During the perinatal period (pregnancy to 12 months following birth) around 10-20% of women are affected by perinatal mental health problems, which include postnatal depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and postpartum psychosis (Khan, 2015).

To try and address the above, part of the NHS's Five Year Forward View implementation plan of 2016 was to increase access to specialist perinatal community teams by 2020/2021, with funding predicted to allow at least an additional 30,000 women each year to receive evidence-based treatment closer to home.

However, a report commissioned from the Centre for Mental Health assessed how the Covid-19 pandemic reduced access to health services and impacted maternal mental health and the government has recognised the need for evidence-based evaluation of women's health services. The 'Women's Health Strategy: Call for Evidence' consultation reported on nearly 100,000 individual women's experiences of the healthcare system in England with specific feedback given on mental health. This informed the Department of Health and Social Care's 'Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England' published in December 2021. The publication recognised that there are disparities in mental health outcomes such as for those with pre-existing mental health conditions or those from ethnic minorities. The government's forthcoming strategy will examine this in more detail, with the aim of improving medical outcomes for women.

The much-anticipated final Ockenden report into maternity care failings at Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust was published at the end of March 2022. In respect of learning for maternal mental health services, the reports calls for NHS Trusts to put in place robust mechanisms to identify psychological distress, provide access to timely support without need for formal mental health diagnosis and to deliver psychological support for the most complex cases through psychological practitioners with specialist expertise in maternity care.

MMHA's theme for last week was the 'power of connection', with a focus on improving access to support. During the pandemic Browne Jacobson launched a #BeJoined campaign, acting at the forefront of society's biggest issues as a connector to bringing together businesses, legal services, and other groups, discussing the challenges being faced across the health and social care sectors and offering practical support.

We would like to continue this action by assisting our health and social care clients meet the challenge of improving maternal mental health services. First and foremost we invite open discussion of the issues contained in this article. The key learning from Browne

Jacobson's Shared Insights session on mental health in maternity can be accessed [here](#).

Our next Shared Insights session on 17 May 2022 will be discussing the implementation of the Ockenden actions. To register your interest please email events@brownejacobson.com

Browne Jacobson's [maternity services resources hub](#) provides resources and information about our specialist teams and the support we can provide in relation to maternity issues. There are also resources available on [MMHA's](#) website.

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