



PQN Newsletter

Sharing network updates, developments in our member services, and resources

Welcome!

We are very pleased to bring you the second issue of the PQN newsletter.

We provide you with some updates from the network, what we have been working on in 2021, and what's coming up later in the year on **page 2**.

Read about the Prambler Walking Group being ran by the Staffordshire Perinatal Community Team on **page 3**.

We hear from the South West Yorkshire Trust perinatal team about their growing team of peer support workers and the work they have been doing on **pages 4-5**.

We also have an article from Dr James McManus about Compassion Focused Therapy on **pages 6-7**.

The Lancashire and South Cumbria Specialist Perinatal Community Mental Health Team tell us about their virtual nursery nurses group on **page 8**.

We welcomed a new member to the Advisory Group, Mary Ofori. Read Mary's 60 second interview on **page 9**.

If you would like to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter you can find out how on **page 9**.

Finally, you can find resources and contact details for the team on **page 10**.

Best wishes

The PQN team



Updates...

Working virtually

We are still working virtually and have managed to migrate our review cycles online. We successfully held 15 inpatient reviews last year and are coming towards the end of our community cycle.

Online events

We held accreditation training in March 2021 which was well attended and means we have more accreditation-trained reviewers to join our review teams. We are holding more accreditation training on 7th July. Please register using [MS Forms](#).

On the 18th May we held a special interest day for Nurses' Day and were joined by some fantastic speakers who gave presentations on breastfeeding, the work of parent-infant psychotherapists, prescribing during the perinatal period, the management of perinatal affective disorders, and LGBTQ parents and mental health.

Remember to save the date for the PQN Annual Forum on Monday 8th November! We will be circulating details of how to submit abstracts and sign up later in the summer.

Growth of the network

Our network is ever growing and in 2020 nine community teams became members of the PQN. We now have 64 community teams and 21 inpatient units as members of the network. If you want to sign up to any of our reviews, please keep an eye out for our weekly roundup emails which detail our upcoming reviews. To join the mailing list, please email perinatal-chat@rcpsych.ac.uk



Pramblers Walking Group

The Prambler Walking Group is open for women within the Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust Community perinatal team. Here's what they told us:

'We facilitate four sessions for local walks around Staffordshire that are push-chair friendly.

The Staffordshire Perinatal Community Team noticed the impact on our new mums of not having the regular face-to-face contact with family, friends and parenting groups during a critical time in their life. Mums were missing out on the opportunity to chat with other mums on what to expect in the early stages of motherhood, the "how do you do this" sort of thing!

We recognised that mums needed to stay connected and the great benefit of being outdoors reduces stress and anxiety, improving the quality of yours and your baby's mental health.

A carefully planned pre Christmas walk was arranged for December 10th. Some mums were still a little anxious regarding going out so we decided to keep the group small. Both mums thoroughly enjoyed the walk and were keen to continue.

In January we facilitated walks around Stafford Castle, The Isabel trail, Shugborough Hall and Wolseley Nature Reserve.

February's walking group will take us to Cannock and in March we will be looking for walks around Lichfield. Our aim is to move around the county to support our mums and baby's.'



Lovely to speak to other mums in the same situation. I felt safe and well supported.

The group made me feel really good and refreshed; I would definitely recommend the group. My baby loved going out and I feel we had time to bond.

WHAT DOES A PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH TEAM IN YORKSHIRE DO WITH 6 NEW PEER SUPPORT WORKERS?

CREATE, INNOVATE AND DELIVER – THAT’S WHAT!!!

Since February 2020 the South West Yorkshire Trusts perinatal team has gained 6 Peer Support Workers. They are a group of mums, who all have lived experience of perinatal mental health that provide a service which accompanies the doctors, practitioners, therapists and nursery nurses within the team.

Starting in post just as lockdown began has not been easy but this team of Peer Support Workers have pulled out all the stops to ensure women who access their service get the best possible support.

Fast forward to March 2021 and they have put into place a wide range of holistic interventions:

Face to face peer support groups, a friendly atmosphere where mums come along with their baby to have a cuppa, chat and offer support to one another. The ladies feel less alone and accepted - just as they are. Mums were asked what they wanted the peer support group to look like and their suggestions have been used to make it a success. The mums have gone on to form friendships outside of the group.

“It is lovely to come to a group and be amongst women who know just how I feel, I look forward to coming every week, it keeps me going”

Staying well group, for ladies that have had previous mental health history and are looking for advice and support surrounding staying well throughout their pregnancy. A structured weekly group covering, journaling, exercise, meditation, being kind to yourself and positivity. The Nursery Nurses offer a bonding with bump session in week 3.

“Just wanted to say thanks to both of you for running the group. I found it really helpful and something that really kept me positive and focussed over the 4 weeks.”

Bi-monthly peer support walks, 5km walk and talk to blow away the cobwebs, chat, laugh and meet other mums, across the Trust area.

Wellness packages, delivered to ladies being discharged, full of new ideas to try so they can take ownership of their own mental health and continued recovery, a sort of “hand to hold” as they step away from services.

“It was really important to me that the package was hand delivered and the tag handwritten as it made me feel like a human being and not a patient. It’s a brilliant taster of each thing, empowering people to try new things. It has re-ignited my love for alternative therapies and different ways of looking at things.”





Antenatal Peer support group, run weekly, online, where mums can speak freely amongst themselves and the Peer Support Workers. It features drop ins from professionals such as Perinatal Lead Midwife speaking about positive birthing, Perinatal Lead Health Visitor discussing not feeling the bond and love instantly with baby and FAB breastfeeding support. Most recently we have had a trained hypnobirthing specialist. Attendees usually form friendships with other expectant mums.

The Creative Project, which enables women who find it hard to express how their mental illness feels, to draw, paint or write about their experiences instead. This has led to one piece of art winning the PQN art competition in 2020. In September 2021 all the ladies work will be displayed throughout one of our towns, in the annual Wakefield Art Walk, with assistance from The Art House.

A detailed support email for Dads has also been compiled which signposts them to books, apps and support services specifically aimed at men.

All in all, it's been a busy year for this team of peer support workers. Ideas have been discussed, tried, tweaked and tried again to provide a fantastic package of care that compliments the rest of the work offered by The SWYT Perinatal Team. A holistic approach that places the women and their families first and in the centre.

Compassion Focused Therapy: A New Group Therapy Intervention in a Specialist Perinatal Community Mental Health Service

Dr James McManus, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Dr Tara Seed, Clinical Psychologist, Rachael Ryan, Trainee Clinical Psychologist, Jennie Kendrick, Social Worker, *Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Trust Specialist Perinatal CMHT*

What is Compassion Focused Therapy?

Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) is a multi-modal psychological therapy that aims to support people to develop and strengthen compassion to work with human suffering and distress. The therapy draws on cognitive behavioural therapy, attachment theory, evolutionary psychology, affective neuroscience and the literature on mindfulness and compassion. There is a growing evidence base that supports the use of CFT with a wide range of clinical problems including psychosis (Braehler et al., 2012), binge eating disorder (Kelly & Carter, 2015), depression and anxiety (Noorbala et al., 2013) and post-traumatic stress disorder (Beaumont, Galpin & Jenkins, 2012). These studies have demonstrated promising results across psychiatric disorders. In particular, CFT offers promise in targeting the common psychological problems of shame and self-criticism.

Compassion Focused Therapy in Perinatal Mental Health Services

There is a strong history of using CFT in perinatal mental health services, initiated by consultant clinical psychologist Dr Michelle Cree's work in the Derbyshire Perinatal Mental Health Service (Cree, 2010) and there is an emerging evidence base supporting the effectiveness of this therapy approach in perinatal mental health (Kelman et al., 2018).

Development of the Perinatal CFT Group

The therapy group was developed by the authors, based on published manuals by Prof Paul Gilbert (Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Derby) and Dr Michelle Cree (Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Perinatal Mental Health Service, Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Trust). The groups were open to any women receiving care from the Specialist Perinatal CMHT, either in pregnancy or post-natally. The group was a twelve-session course, with each session lasting two hours. Each session included time for 'checking in' and group discussion, followed by an education topic and associated group learning activities, and finally a skills practice, which was then worked on at home in the following week. Examples of skills practices included: mindfulness, breathwork, imagery exercises, letter writing and behavioural goal-setting.

Over the past 12 months, two therapy groups have been delivered. The first of these was delivered in person at a local children's centre for a group of nine women and their babies. It was optional for women to bring their baby, and toys and a safe space were provided in the middle of the group circle for babies to play. Women reported appreciating the option to bring their baby, especially as some had difficulty accessing any other childcare. The second group was delivered online, for eight women, using video conferencing technology (Microsoft Teams) because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The aims of the CFT group were to provide information and education to women experiencing perinatal mental health problems about the human mind, emotions, attachment and the psychological impact of past experiences and relationships, to teach a range of emotion regulation and coping strategies, with a focus on managing threat-focused thoughts and feelings including shame, guilt and self-criticism, and to provide a therapeutic space to develop an understanding of problems in the context of life and family history and support parents in their relationship with themselves and with their baby.



Evaluation of the Group

A total of seventeen women under the care of the Perinatal CMHT were referred to the CFT groups. Of these, two dropped out of therapy meaning that fifteen women (88.24%) completed the group. Of these, eleven women completed all the outcome measures. The following four self-report measures were administered prior to the first session ('pre-group') and after the end of the final session ('post-group'):

1. Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE-OM; CORE-10)
2. Post-partum Bonding Questionnaire (PBQ)
3. Forms of Self-Criticising/ attacking and self-Reassuring Scale (FSCRS)
4. Other As Shamer scale (OAS)

The scores showed improvement on all outcome measures, demonstrating the positive impact of the therapy groups on reducing psychological distress, improving self-compassion, reducing shame, and improving maternal self-reports of their relationship with their baby.

Measure	Scale/ factor	Pre-group median	Post-group median
CORE	CORE-OM (<i>n</i> =5)	15	7.3
	CORE 10 (<i>n</i> =6)	25	15
PBQ	Impaired bonding	12	3
	Rejection and anger	3	3
	Infant-focused anxiety	7	4
	Risk of abuse	0	0
FSCRS	Inadequate self	28	18
	Hated self	10	4
	Reassure self*	12	21
OAS	Total score	41	24

*An increase in score on this factor reflects improvement, while a reduction in score on all other measures reflects improvement

Conclusions

The CFT groups have been well-attended and well-received. Women who attended the group report finding the group very beneficial, and this is reflected in the scores on the outcome measures presented above. It has been good to see that the good outcomes and good feedback continued even when the group moved online. The experience of running the group using video conferencing has been generally positive, with feedback from some participants that it made accessing the group easier, although some people did say they would have preferred to have met each other in person. The plan is to continue to offer this group therapy intervention as a core part of the psychological provision within the specialist perinatal mental health service. There is a need for more high-quality research into this exciting area of work, in particular randomized controlled trials that compare CFT to treatment as usual and to other forms of therapy.

To conclude, some quotes from women who completed the group:

The CFT group has helped me in countless ways and I am not sure where I would be now without it. Because of all I learned in the group, I am now able to enjoy (or at least cope well with) every aspect of motherhood and my baby like I had always hoped and expected I would.

You've helped me to understand my mind and shown me how to get through dark moments. I never thought I would be able to feel better, so thank you.

The group has helped make life better for not only myself, but my baby and my husband and our lives as a family, and we will be forever grateful.

CHAT SHARE CONNECT - Nursery Nurse virtual group

Specialist Perinatal CMHT Lancashire and South Cumbria

Due to restrictions of lockdown and the effects it was having on our service users, it was felt that it would be beneficial to develop a Nursery Nurse led virtual group for mums being supported by Specialist Perinatal CMHT, Lancashire and South Cumbria. At the start of July 2020 we launched our pilot virtual group – CHAT SHARE CONNECT.

The aim of the group was to offer a forum for mums to connect with other mum's, to discuss topics which related to being a mum and caring for their baby as well as promoting self-care for themselves. Within the group, the hope was for mums to gain knowledge, confidence and feel comfortable to share their own experiences of being a mum and the challenges that arise. We wanted to promote peer support and reduce isolation.

The group was facilitated by two Nursery Nurses, Pam Young and Emma Stoney as well as A Peer Support Facilitator-APP, Jocelyn Ellams. The group took place via Microsoft Teams over a five week period. Five mums were invited and encouraged to join the group with their baby's. They were all given the opportunity to share experiences, tips and any resources that has helped them. Weekly Topics included Play, Daily Routines (impacts of covid), Baby States, Crying and Sleep. Jocelyn was also guest speaker one week and shared her experience of perinatal mental health and how she now offers peer support.

After each session, Evaluation Forms were sent either via email or completed by telephone contact dependant on what was requested. Handouts were also posted each week including further information about the topics discussed, self-care ideas and affirmations cards. A certificate of attendance was given to all mums and babies when the group came to an end.

Since the pilot we have continued to offer the group in each of our areas across Lancashire and South Cumbria and continue to improve and develop this taking into account the feedback we receive from our service users. This has included extending the group to 6 weeks and offering time after the group for the mums to connect.

Although there are challenges when facilitating a virtual group and it still does not fully compare to a face to face group, the feedback has highlighted how beneficial and valuable the mums found it. They found that meeting other mums and knowing they are going through something similar helped. They did not feel judged. They felt topics were relevant. One mum in particular wrote: 'Even simply having others to be able to coo over my baby was something I had not properly experienced outside of family and I am grateful for that.'

Mum's felt that the advantages of a virtual group was 'being in your own home and the feeling of safeness', 'No judgement and relaxed environment', 'Meeting other mums', Meeting other professionals' and 'Understanding others mums issues, thoughts and ideas.' All mums would recommend the group to others. It was described as a supportive environment where they felt reassured that the support was so accessible. 'It's something positive to participate in and interesting to hear other mums perspectives, it's also assuring that there are other fabulous, witty 'normal' women like yourself that are suffering.'

Since the pilot we have offered the mums at the end of the group to stay on the call and 'connect'. This has led to them being in regular contact with each other within a Whats App group where they can continue to access their own peer support.

The feedback below captures the importance of maintaining connections during this current climate: 'In these difficult isolating times it was genuinely helpful to connect with others. Some days I haven't had conversations so just to be part of a discussion was helpful regardless of content.'

We want to hear from you!

Want to share your work or present your findings to a wide audience?

This newsletter is dedicated to network developments and areas of best practice to improve the quality of care for people using perinatal mental health service. If you would like more information regarding the contents of this newsletter, have any ideas for something you would like to see next time or would like to contribute an article, then please get in touch!

The maximum length for articles is 500 words, comprising an introduction, main body and conclusion. Please include any relevant references and other materials you think might be useful for the article.



If you would like to submit an article or have any questions about this, please send to perinatal-chat@rcpsych.ac.uk.

60 seconds with...Mary Ofori, AG member

What were you doing before you joined the team?

30 years in September I began my nursing journey. Beginning in an Acute Admission Inpatient ward, I progressed to a variety of roles in different sectors within the mental health services; e.g. the Mother and Baby Inpatient Unit, Adult CMHT, the Community Perinatal Mental Health Team etc. I have now been in a leadership role within Perinatal for 18 years. I will say, in any caring role or profession, aside from all the academic attainments, it really needs to come from a 'deeper place'.

Tell us a little bit about your role:

It is an incredible privilege to be elected as a member of the PQN advisory Group. I am looking forward to the collaborative discussions and working with my colleagues in an area in mental health that we are all passionate about to make a difference to our staff, women and families that we serve.

If you could learn anything new, what would it be?

I will say, my IT skills have enhanced tremendously during this lockdown and I have taken up a skipping challenge to improve my fitness.

What was the title of the last book you read?

Michelle Obama's autobiography, 'Becoming'. I found this book very inspirational, motivational and my take on this book is; sometimes it's not about how you start, it's about how you finish.

What is the one thing you wish people knew more about?

The one thing I wish more people knew about me is that part of my nature is to always assume the best in people. This attribute feeds into my passion in nursing.

Useful links and resources

College Centre for Quality Improvement

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workinpsychiatry/qualityimprovement.aspx>

Quality Network for Perinatal Mental Health Service

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workinpsychiatry/qualityimprovement/ccqiprojects/perinatal/perinatalqualitynetwork.aspx>

National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health

<http://www.nccmh.org.uk/>

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

www.nice.org.uk

Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network

<http://www.sign.ac.uk/>

London Perinatal Mental Health Network

<http://www.londonscn.nhs.uk/networks/mental-health-dementia-neuroscience/mental-health/perinatal-mental-health/>

New Parent Support

<https://www.nct.org.uk/>

PANDAS Foundation

www.pandasfoundation.org.uk/

Perinatal-chat has moved!

We have moved our perinatal-chat discussion forum to a new home on [Knowledge Hub](#).

Knowledge Hub allows you to stay connected with other PQN members and post and respond to queries much quicker. To join Knowledge Hub, please take a few minutes to make your free account and then search for PQN. Once you have signed up, make sure you read over our user agreement under the 'Forum' tab.

On Knowledge Hub we will post information about events and resources as well as announcements, so don't miss out!

Meet the team

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