



# PQN Newsletter

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

## **Welcome!**

The PQN team has been very busy the past few months with an additional five community teams joining the network, the start of both the inpatient Cycle 14 and community Cycle 9, the Annual Forum, standards revision and accreditation training. Following all of this we are very pleased to bring you the third issue of the PQN newsletter!

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

Read about the perinatal peer support work and art walk at South West Yorkshire Trust on **pages 3-4**.

See the artwork submitted for the PQN art competition 2021 on **pages 5-6**.

We hear from the Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster perinatal team about their piloting of a nature-based mother and baby group on **pages 7-11**.

Read our patient representatives 60 second interviews on **pages 12-13**.

If you would like to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter you can find out how on **page 14**

Read the National Perinatal Community Nursery Nurse Questionnaire Report on **page 15**

Finally, you can find resources and contact details for the team on **page 15**.

Best wishes

The PQN team



## Updates...

### Working virtually

In response to the ongoing pandemic we continue to work virtually and successfully held the entirety of the Cycle 8 community reviews virtually.

### Online events

We held accreditation training in on 14 December which was well received. Attending this training means we have more accreditation-trained reviewers to join our review teams. We are holding more accreditation training on 17 March. Please register using [MS Forms](#).

On the 8 November we held our Annual Forum and were joined by some fantastic speakers who gave presentations on paternal mental health, peer support work, the impact of COVID-19 on Welsh services and Nursery Nurses, experiences of a cross border project on perinatal mental health, using an adapted 'tree of life' model for couples and supporting mothers and infants in the pandemic through an online sensory based five week programme. If you missed this event then you can catch-up on all the sessions on Knowledge Hub!

Remember to save the date for the PQN Diver Motherhood special interest day on Friday 4 February! We will be exploring Exploring inequalities in accessing perinatal services for ethnic minorities , autism and perinatal mental health, working with culturally diverse communities and supporting LGBTQ+ pathways. You can sign up for the event [here](#).

### Growth of the network

Our network is ever growing and in 2021 five community teams became members of the PQN. We now have 70 community teams and 21 inpatient units who are members of the unit. 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](mailto:perinatal-chat@rcpsych.ac.uk)



## Perinatal Peer Support Work at SWYT: Showcasing the Hidden Mind of Motherhood at Wakefield Art Walk

The peer support workers have been collecting creative work from local women for over a year and have finally managed to exhibit the work at Wakefield's Art walk. It has been an alternative way to express their complex feelings and emotions through creative work such as poetry and painting.

The women have found it therapeutic to be able to share how they feel in this way and hope that it has helped others to understand, while breaking the stigma and reducing the shame of perinatal mental illness.

The event was attended by over 70 people and chair of the Trust, Angela Monaghan, read a poem written by local mum Jade.

Those who attended were asked to complete a feedback form if possible before they left:

"A courageous exhibition that I can see is going to make a positive change."

"Thanks for sharing, for normalising the fears and feelings about being a mum"

"What an amazing insight into the hardships, struggles and recovery of a new mum. The work is so honest and so brave. I honestly didn't expect it to hit me so hard. I think this work from these ladies, who are so brave, should be a mandatory part of training for anyone that works with new mums. Let's try to prevent things being missed and not treated in a timely manner because it shocks me that even now in 2021 people and professionals can miss the needs of new mums. Excellent display and well done to all of those that contributed."

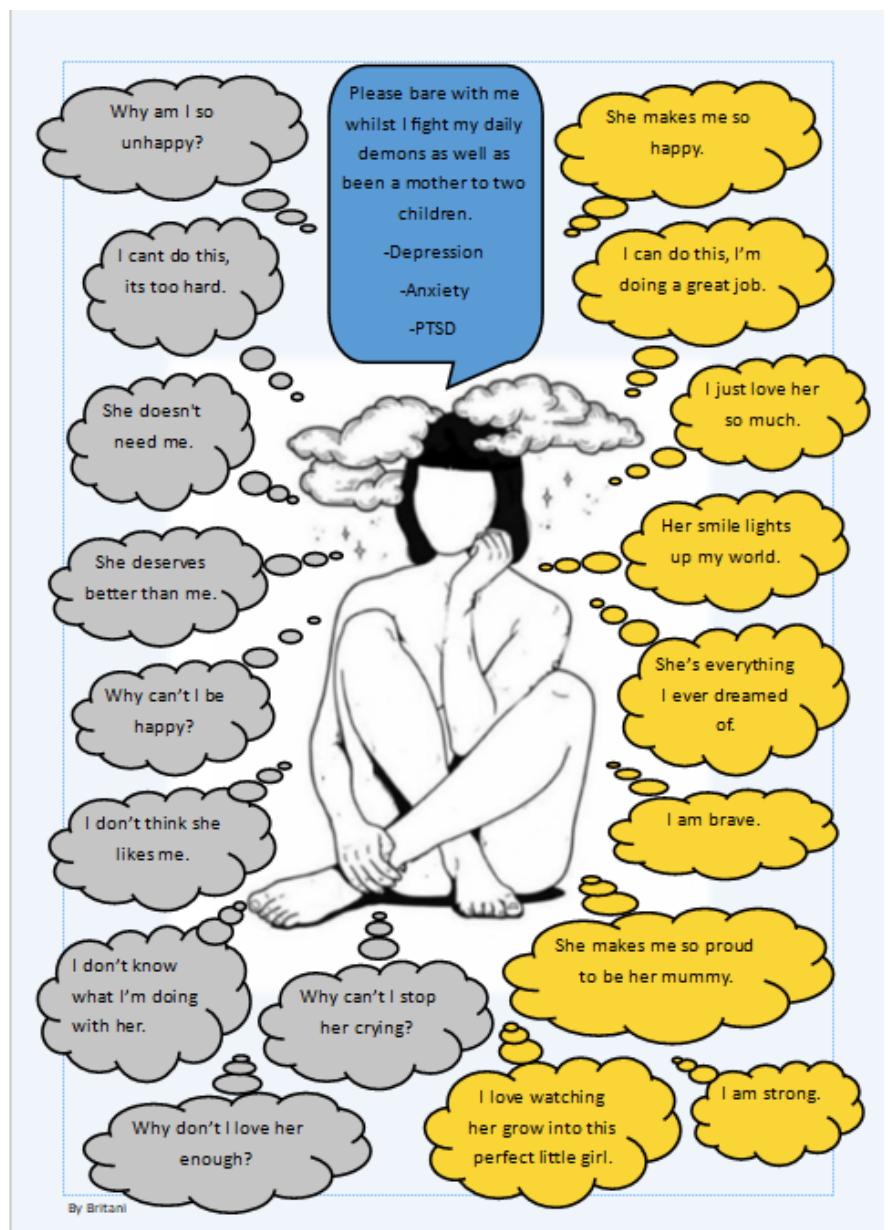
"A thought-provoking journey into perinatal mental health showcasing challenges and emotions that women can experience within their journey. This visual interpretation is created by women that have been a part of the SWYT perinatal team. They hope it will raise awareness, break the stigma and increase understanding of perinatal mental illness."

A sample of the work shown:

### The Darkness Comes

The darkness comes around again  
 I can feel it taking over  
 It takes hold of your heart your life and your smile slowly taking you down piece by piece until you feel like you can't go on  
 A dark cloud that follows you around  
 The wounds get deeper just like the pain  
 You feel you want to scream but the sound doesn't come out no one sees your heart ache  
 You hide away hoping it will leave again til another day  
 To smile a real smile and laugh from deep within  
 But it feels like the end will never come  
 Days turn into weeks, weeks into months until eventually a glimmer of hope  
 The tears start to dry the wounds start to heal and the sunshine starts to push the darkness away until one day you wake and the light shines through again  
 You take a deep breath  
 smile a true smile and  
 finally feel yourself again  
 You savour each day and  
 love and laugh with all  
 your heart knowing the  
 darkness will take over  
 again one day but until  
 then you keep fighting for  
 the sunshine while you  
 hold that day at bay.

By T.G



**You Are Not Alone by B.S.**

## PQN Art Competition 2021

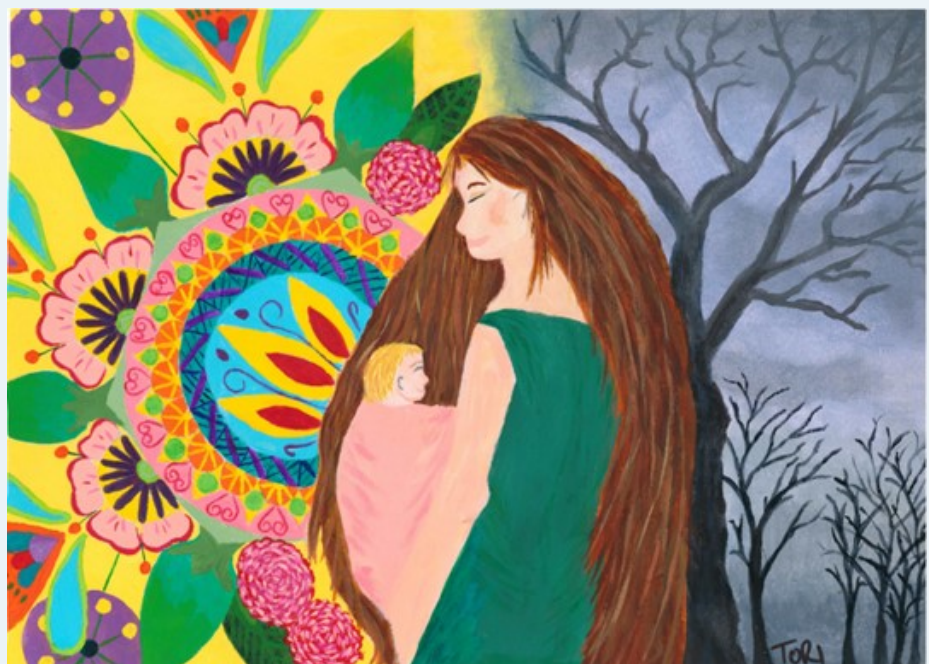
This year saw the return of the PQN art competition. The competition was open to all patients, either currently admitted or recently discharged, from our member services. Submissions could be in the form of any visual art, such as paintings, drawings, photography, digital art etc. There was no set theme but we suggested a few possible themes for inspiration: Motherhood, New Beginnings, Bonding, Nurturing, Playtime and Family. We had first and second prize winners.

The first prize winner was Tori with 'Postnatal Depression: A Double Life'. The second prize winner was Magalini with 'Zephyr and Maggie'. We were incredibly impressed with all of the entries, below and overleaf on pages 6 and 7 are all of the entries.



**Zephyr + Maggie, Magdalini, East London MBU (Second Place)**

**Postnatal Depression: A Double Life—Tori, Durham and Darlington Perinatal Service (First Place)**



## Motherhood, Helen, SWLSTG



## Hare, Caroline, Nottingham Perinatal Community Team

I want to dedicate 'The State of Art Mothers Award' to all mothers around the world, and especially to those who are still struggling in this pandemic of our time. I wish all your children a safe and secure life.

### THE STATE OF ART MOTHERS AWARD

I am as strong as storm  
I am as big as ocean  
I am as wise as sky  
I am as kind as earth

I am storm  
I am ocean  
I am sky  
I am earth

I am nature

I have no fear  
I have no fear

Sail to the sea  
I am ready  
I can go through this storm with ease and calming joy

I am not scared  
I am ready

Sail to the sea

## aVa, Work-in-progress The State of Art Mothers Award SWLSTG

# Connecting with Nature in an Urban Jungle: Pilot of a Perinatal Mental Health Nature-Based Mother and Baby Group in Central London

*By Rachael McGeehin, Senior Occupational Therapist, Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster Community Perinatal Teams*

The World Health Organisation has declared the global climate crisis as a health emergency. This has led to calls for sustainability to be at the forefront of healthcare solutions. The Royal College of Occupational Therapists placed sustainability as a required standard of practice. In 2020 Public Health England published the report – ‘Improving access to greenspace a new review’. The report states we must “consider local green (and blue) space to be critical assets for maintaining and supporting health and wellbeing in local communities”.

Evidence has consistently proved the link between engagement in nature and health and wellbeing. The benefits of being in greenspaces include promoting health behaviours such as exercise; improving social connection; foster sense of belonging; reducing loneliness and supporting the development of skills and capabilities particularly in young people such as improved motor skills and academic performance. The immense benefits of greenspace and drives to increase consideration of this in health planning are recognised repeatedly through policies such as; Loneliness Strategy; Prevention Better than Cure; 5- Year Forward View for Mental Health; Integrated Communities Action Plan and UN Sustainable Development Goals. The benefits of reducing loneliness is particularly of interest when working with perinatal populations following recent findings that during the pandemic 63% of parents felt lonely, a significant increase from pre-COVID when it was 38%.

Greenspaces can also be used as a medium to achieve occupational and social justice – “greenspace can be an important tool in the ambition to increase healthy life expectancy and narrow the gap between life chances of the richest and poorest in society”. This finding supports the use of interventions that promote the use of green spaces particularly in London which homes people across socio-economic backgrounds. With findings indicating the positive changes this could promote





particularly for those without access to a garden as is common inner areas of cities. An area of important exploration particularly giving the theme of this years OT Week placing #OTsForEquity at the forefront of the profession.

The use of nature as a preventative healthcare approach is effectively adopted and integrated in the Japanese healthcare system with amazing results. In the 1980s. This was found to reduce stress; cancer risk; and improve mental health among many other things. Estimates have looked at potential health implications of using greenspaces in England the belief is “in England there would be an annual savings of about £760 million in avoidable medical costs if people had one or more ‘active’ visits per week to a greenspace”. “Evidence indicates people who feel more connected to nature tend to have a more positive

outlook on life; increased vitality, life satisfaction, feelings that life is worthwhile and of personal growth”.

Occupational therapists are experts of understanding the influence of the environment on occupational performance. Currently there is a strong focus on occupational therapy leading the way in developing sustainable healthcare interventions using their unique skills in connecting people, health and the environment. Occupational therapists particularly those working in mental health settings have a long history of using nature-based interventions to support recovery and health.

This year and the KCW perinatal teams first nature-based mother and baby group was held in the public greenspace of a central city park. A group aimed to support wellbeing but also act as a health promoting and preventative healthcare intervention. This was through fostering a connection with nature for both mother and child hoping to cause continued use of public greenspace following completion of group creating improved long-term health outcomes.





Due to limited resources the two pilot groups were delivered by myself and a colleague (nursery nurse and student nurse). The group included but was not limited to; mindfulness, nature crafts, journaling, poetry reading, and a forest-bathing inspired nature walk. Photographs were captured of moments between mothers and infants to enable mothers to be present in the moment without worrying of missing moments to reflect on later. Team members were encouraged to refer to group and provided with a poster promoting group. In total 5 people attended the groups. Infants ranged in age from 9 weeks old to 7 months old.

Each person completed a pre-group survey about how important nature was to them; their baby; in terms of health and how connected they felt to other parents. 100% of mums were aware of local green spaces with

all mums displaying this walking to the park group. However, 80% mums reported their ability to access these green spaces had changed since becoming parents. People described facing barriers to using these spaces. They now had to consider the terrain suitability for prams and baby facilities available. Mothers valued spending time with their baby in nature with 60% rating it very important and 40% as important. Everyone cited common reasons for this such as; both mum and baby being able to relax and enjoy fresh air. One mother stated she works in green and blue spaces and hoped her child enjoyed this too, bonding through shared enjoyment of nature. One mother noticed after being in nature her child was more settled after being in nature. 60% did not feel well informed of the health benefits of spending time in nature. However, 80% noticed a change in their health after being in nature. These changes were mental health related including feeling more positive and refreshed. 100% of mums believed there had been a change in their ability to connect with others since the birth of their baby.

These initial findings support the need for nature-based groups with perinatal populations. These groups are meaningful for parents and their infants with all mothers in our group reporting nature allowed co-occupation between them and baby. People are not aware of the benefits of being outdoors and this is an area OTs can support with in addition to supporting access of green spaces during transition to motherhood.

A feedback form was completed following the group. 100% found useful and would recommend it to others. The comments showed each mother gained something unique from the group but reflected common themes of getting time to themselves and time with baby; connecting with other mums.

*"I have a chance with other mums and be able to share view & experiences. It's an eye opener that spending time in the park made me felt like I had time for myself even I'm with my baby. I can stop thinking about my baby & other things and be able to enjoy the nature. It also showed how easy we both can have a good time and spending time outside the house was not difficult like I thought".*

*"It was relaxed and friendly and gave me a chance to get outside and take some time for me".*

*"Everything was great well guided good to see how nature helped us relax. Nice to meet other mums and babies and be in the fresh air. Loved having things to interact with babies like ribbons. Enjoyed taking time and to really be present with nature and our babies having that dedicated time and share our experiences was valuable".*

*"It helps me more confident to go out with my baby and make me feel less lonely".*

*"Would love more of these groups so great and felt the benefits all week".*

The group did have difficulties. One week extreme wet and windy conditions resulted in the group being cancelled due to safety issues of branches falling. In feedback the need to consider how the group can be facilitated in adverse weather was mentioned and is definitely something to plan for in future particularly given the UK weather.

*"Since the weather condition limited the accessibility to the park, other venues could be considered so the group can keep running".*

*"There needs to be a back up if the weather is bad".*

Starting a nature group in an urban center felt like a gamble and I wasn't certain if it would be effective. Similarly, the plan for a two-week program was disrupted reducing the input received. I was relieved when the feedback arrived and the benefits of group were clearly evident after only one nature group session!



*"Although i only attended one session I really enjoyed it and think it's a great idea. It encouraged me to get outside and connect more with nature- which also benefits my child. It was nice to see the effect it had on my baby of watching the outdoor world".*

It has motivated me to continue providing the group and see the benefits of having multiple sessions. Based on findings from the initial pilots I am optimistic that this mother and baby park group is a sustainable occupation-based intervention that is meaningful that can be offered long term in perinatal services.

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## 60 seconds with... Charlie Francis-Pape, PQN Patient Representative

### **Tell us a little bit about your experience as a patient representative.**

I'm a midwife in North Bristol and mother to three wonderful small humans.

I have worked as a PMH patient rep for over 7 years in various capacities and 18 months for the PQN. I joined at the start of the pandemic so have only ever taken part in reviews virtually. This suits me wonderfully as a single mother who is very busy, I can still do my part for the PQN and for PMH care and still be in time for the school run!

Having suffered from most forms of PMH myself and having been an inpatient of Dorset's MBU, I have made it my life's work to improve PMH care and reduce stigma nationally. My own experience enables me to see the service and how it would impact women and their families, keeping service users at the heart of all we do.

### **What do you enjoy most about being a patient representative/advisory group member?**

I love my role. It's such a responsibility to ensure services are delivering gold standard care. It's also incredibly enriching for me in my role in PMH and as an RM. For services who are delivering beyond expectations, I am able to learn from them and take back pointers to my own trust. For newer services who are struggling post covid and because of poor staffing it's a very supportive role. It's very rewarding to be able to support those trusts and help them to make more of their service so their service users get the experience they deserve.

### **Do you have any hobbies/skills?**

In my own time, I adore playing, baking and reading with my children, now aged 7, 8 and 11 in addition to going on adventures together in our vintage caravan Ethel.

I am also a passionate house designer so am always painting a mural or reflooring some part of my house.

### **What is your self-care go-to?**

As someone who is bipolar, self care is hugely important to me, I have learnt the hard way as to how important it is. I ensure I factor 'rest days' into my busy life where I crochet or do something creative in front of a box set. I also make sure I sleep more than 8 hours a night or nap in the day when this is not possible. I was taught mindfulness in the MBU 7 years ago, so often drift off to sleep while listening to a body scan or meditation. And above all, I always try and let the small things go in life when you have known unhappiness, it's important to be grateful for simple pleasures and not to take wellness for granted.

### **What was the last book you read?**

The last book I read was the Scythe trilogy. A dystopian series set in a world where all diseases have been cured and mental health is instantly fixed by nanobots that live in humans' blood, adjusting hormones and chemical imbalances as needed - now wouldn't that be a dream!

## 60 seconds with... Bronwen Ashton, PQN Patient Representative

### **What is your name and job title?**

My name is Bronwen Ashton and I am a patient representative for the Perinatal Quality Network (PQN).

### **What do you like to do in your spare time?**

Good question – with 2 children I don't feel I have much spare time. Both my children are now at High School and I spend most of my time helping them with their homework or providing a taxi service. I do like to go for walks as much as I can. I have managed to get back into reading recently which was a passion of mine growing up, and I love pottering in my garden, listening to music and playing card games with my children.

### **Can you explain your role at the College?**

As a patient representative I am part of a team that undertake peer reviews and accreditations for all the mother and baby units in the country, as well as the community perinatal mental health teams. I am also one of the patient representatives that sit on the PQN Accreditation Committee to help support decisions on accrediting services.

### **What skills do you bring to the role, other than your Patient or Carer experience?**

A passion to be involved and help services, and an active listener.

### **What's the best part of your role?**

Feeling like I'm helping to make a difference and supporting other women.

### **What drew you to the role?**

I have been doing this role for nearly 9 years now. I was drawn to it as I felt it was so important to have representation from someone with lived experience helping to enrich services. It also formed a really important part of my recovery and helped me gain confidence in my everyday life.

### **Have you been affected by the fuel shortages?**

Not really – I live in Leeds and I think 'up north' we don't have the difficulties accessing fuel that are being felt further south.

### **What was the last book you read?**

The Midnight Library by Matt Haig. I enjoyed it very much and found it an interesting concept to be able to go back and look at how your life would have been had you taken a different path.

### **What's your favourite album?**

A hard choice – I think my favourite album has changed over the years from The Cramps "Bad Music for Bad People", Led Zep "The Song Remains the Same, The Pixies "Doolittle", Guns N Roses "Appetite for Destruction", all albums by Abba, Cabaret musical with Liza Minelli, the greatest hits of Queen, James Brown, Aretha Franklin and Dennis Brown to anything by Muse and Matt Monroe. I think songs rather than albums provide the soundtrack to my life – my favourite song is "On days like these" by Matt Monroe.

# National Perinatal Community Nursery Nurse Questionnaire Report

*By Lisa Cassidy, Senior Perinatal Community Nursery Nurse, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust*

This Perinatal Community Nursery Nurse (PCNN) questionnaire report was the result of:

- the national Perinatal service development
- the implementation of Nursery Nurses as part of multi-disciplinary teams
- recognition that there was no clear career pathway or development and limited understanding of the Nursery Nurse skillset in the workforce.

Whilst networking with one another, often at meetings such as the specialist interest day offered by the Perinatal Quality Network (PQN) at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, PCNNs from all over the UK began to reflect on their role questioning and reflecting on provision, knowledge and expectations around the role and within their teams.

Whilst recognising the need to develop and standardise the PCNN role there is no current evidence around any Nursery Nursing role let alone current evidence around the specialist role of the PCNN. The questionnaire and subsequent report has been written to reflect the thoughts of current PCNNs working in this role, hopeful that there will be growth and development.

Please note it is an individual piece of work intended to inform and recognise current need. It is not a commissioned report.

The full report can be [found here](#).

## 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](mailto:perinatal-chat@rcpsych.ac.uk).

## 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](http://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/](http://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

**Arun Das**, Programme Manager

**Hafiza Ali**, Project Officer

**Thea Walker**, Project Officer

**Email us at:** [perinatal-chat@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:perinatal-chat@rcpsych.ac.uk)

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