



Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service (SPMHS)

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND CARERS







WELCOME

The Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service (SPMHS) is a community-based service for mums with severe mental health difficulties either now or in the past, during pregnancy or up to a year after birth. The service is provided by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.



WHO ARE WE?

The SPMHS comprises four teams of perinatal mental health professionals from a range of different disciplines. These include psychiatrists, mental health nurses, psychologists, parent-infant psychotherapists and nursery nurses. They are all highly trained and specialise in perinatal adult and infant mental health.

We provide our specialist service within:

- Family homes
- Accessible community venues
- SPMHS bases such as maternity hospitals, GP surgeries, children's centres

WHAT WE DO

Our teams provide weekly phone and face-to-face clinics at a range of different birthing, maternity and community sites in Coastal West Sussex (CWX), Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, Northwest Sussex (NWX) and East Surrey. Some clinics may be led by our consultant psychiatrists. Others are held by our specialist perinatal mental health practitioners. We also provide clinics led by joint psychiatric and obstetric teams usually in maternity hospitals. Partners are welcome at all our clinic appointments.



WHAT HAPPENS AT A CLINIC APPOINTMENT?

Your clinic appointment will last about an hour and will give you the chance to let us know how you are feeling, how you and your family are coping and think about what might be the best way forward.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A CLINIC APPOINTMENT?

After your clinic appointment, you may be offered a range of different options. These might include on-going advice, assessment, psychological treatment, parent-infant mental health interventions (PIMHS), and onward transfer of care to other services.

WHO SHOULD BE REFERRED?

- Women with current symptoms of severe depression or anxiety, either before or after birth. For example antenatal depression (AND) or postnatal depression (PND).
- Women who are well but who have experienced a serious illness with a previous baby such as postpartum psychosis or postpartum bi-polar disorder or severe PND.
- Parents taking mood stabilising or antipsychotic medication for their mental health who are concerned about getting pregnant and would like some pre-conception advice.
- Women who are experiencing tokophobia, which is severe and acute anxiety about giving birth for the first time.
- Women who have current symptoms of psychosis, which are thoughts that seem highly unusual or bizarre.
- Women who are well but who have experienced bipolar disorder or schizophrenia in the past.
- Women who are well but have had a previous admission to a mental health mother and baby unit (MBU).
- Women who are pregnant and are taking complex medication for their mental health and need specialist assessment and advice.



CONSIDERATION SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN TO:

- Women who are having, or who have had, very severe difficulties bonding with their babies;
- Women who are having moderate symptoms of depression or anxiety in late pregnancy or early after birth;
- Women who are experiencing symptoms of depression where a first degree relative (mother, father or sibling) has experienced puerperal psychosis or bipolar disorder;
- Women who are pregnant and who have had previous severely traumatic births, stillbirth or death of a baby under 28 days, and who are experiencing on-going severe mental health difficulties as a result.



WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A SPMHS

Mums, partners, their babies and families are offered a safe and specialist meeting with one of our team to help think about what they are going through and how being pregnant, or becoming a parent has affected their wellbeing. We offer you the chance to think about how your experience might be different from what you expected and the impact of early parenthood on you as individuals and as a family, including your relationship with your baby.

Our consultant-led clinics offer the chance to get expert help with medication and co-create a plan about what you would find most helpful, and some jointly agreed goals that you would like to work towards. This is then written up into a care plan which can be changed over time. You will have access to your care plan, and can contribute by letting us know what your best hopes for wellness and recovery are.

If your plan includes a recommendation for psychological therapy or parent-infant psychotherapy (PIP) you and your baby will be offered an appointment with one of our parent-infant mental health (PIMHS) specialists. Partners are also welcome if that would be helpful.



COMMON WORRIES

Mums often worry about seeking help. We know that the majority tend to feel that their worries and concerns are not important enough to ask for help, or that if they do seek help, professionals might act in a more frightening way than the problem itself. We would like to assure all parents who use our service that we are here to help and support you with the struggles experienced by many parents and babies, and with any worries or bonding difficulties that you might have.



DADS AND PARTNERS

Dads and partners often know when something is not right. They might also be feeling low themselves. We encourage all partners and fathers to let us know if they need help, and we will link them to the appropriate support services.

HOW TO ACCESS THE SPMHS SERVICE

Referrals to our service can be made by any health professional. This includes Midwives, Health Visitors, GPs, hospital-based teams, children's centre and Social Workers, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Adult Mental Health Workers, ATS and Crisis Teams, and all primary and secondary Approved Mental Health Professionals.

Professionals who have any questions or are not sure whether to refer a woman and her baby, or an expectant mother, can call our administrators, who will put them in touch with a specialist practitioner for an initial consultation.

COASTAL WEST SUSSEX (CWX): 0300 304 0214

BRIGHTON AND HOVE: 0300 304 0097

EAST SUSSEX: 0300 304 0212

NORTHWEST SUSSEX (NWX) AND EAST SURREY: 0300 304 0213



TO MAKE A REFERRAL

If you are a GP, you will need to use the referral form and refer via your patient booking system as you would with all other mental health referrals. If you are a health professional other than a GP, you will need to use our referral form from our website www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/perinatal and return it to:

COASTAL WEST SUSSEX (CWX): 0300 304 0214

BRIGHTON AND HOVE: 0300 304 0097

EAST SUSSEX: 0300 304 0212

NORTHWEST SUSSEX (NWX) AND EAST SURREY: 0300 304 0213

FAX: 0300 304 4985

EMAIL: spnt.perinatalreferrals@nhs.net

IN CASE OF A CRISIS

If you are looking after a woman and her baby who you believe is in crisis and requires an urgent response out of hours, please call:

Sussex Mental Healthline, Monday to Friday 5pm-9am, and 24 hours at weekends and Bank Holidays on **0300 5000 101**.

East Surrey: The Mental Health Crisis Helpline Monday to Friday 5pm-9am, and 24 hours at weekends and Bank Holidays on **0300 456 8342**.

If there is immediate risk to a mother or her baby, please call your GP or go to A&E.



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Get involved

Our charity, Heads On, supports projects that make a real difference to patient care. Get involved at: www.headsoncharity.org



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