



COPING WITH COVID



Perinatal support newsletter

You're not in this alone, we're in this together and we're here to help



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@SWLSTGperinatal

June 2021

Welcome to the November Issue of our Coping with COVID-19 Perinatal Newsletter. This month we will be focusing on Infant Mental Health Awareness Week (7th-13th June) and Father's Day (20th June). We will also be touching on the benefits of acupuncture for general wellbeing in the perinatal period and have a lovely written piece by services Occupational Therapist.

Infant Mental Health Awareness Week

7th-13th June 2021

Infant Mental Health Awareness Week runs every June. It provides an opportunity for everyone working in the sector to raise awareness of the importance of babies' social and emotional development, and to share work they are doing. Both The Perinatal Mental Health Service and The Parent Infant Foundation have put together a range of online webinars and events. See below for the timetables and links to the webinars. This years the theme is **including infants in children and young people's mental health**. Young people's mental health focuses too often on older children, and there is what is called a 'baby blind spot', where children ages 0-18 often get forgotten about. It is important for everyone to consider and talk about infant, children and young people's mental health.

The Perinatal Mental Health Service webinar timetable (the link to events: [Events \(swlstg.nhs.uk\)](https://www.swlstg.nhs.uk))

- Mon AM:** The Magic of Story Telling
PM: Infant brain development
- Tues AM:** Video Intervention Guidance
PM: Circle of Security Parenting Intervention
- Wed AM:** CAHMs Under 5's
PM: Addressing the Baby Blindspot and Infant Massage
- Thurs AM:** 1001 Day Manifesto
PM: Infant Feeding
- Fri AM:** Understand your baby
PM: Effects of Play

The Parent Infant Foundation program of events

[210519-IMHAW-Programme-of-events-external.pdf](https://www.parentinfantfoundation.org.uk/210519-IMHAW-Programme-of-events-external.pdf)
([parentinfantfoundation.org.uk](https://www.parentinfantfoundation.org.uk))

#Includinginfants
in children and young
people's mental health



**INFANT
MENTAL HEALTH
AWARENESS WEEK**
7-13 June 2021



#IMHAW21
7-13 June 2021

Maternal mental health week (in case you missed it)

Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week

was a week-long campaign (4th-7th May) dedicated to talking about mental health problems during and after pregnancy.

The aim was to raise public and professional awareness of perinatal mental health problems, advocating for women affected by it, changing attitudes and helping families access the information, care and support they need to recover.

The SWLSTG perinatal team held a number of webinars and talks during the week which was really successful and very informative.

Topics included topics such as Infant brain development, perinatal assessments, safeguarding and domestic abuse and a wonderful lived experience story told by a previous client Usue. Feedback was really lovely and all links to the webinars are below and can be viewed on You Tube.

Our next week of events will look at Infant Mental Week which is being held 7th-13th June so hope some of you will be able to join us.

Links to the webinars:

- **A lived experience story**
<https://youtu.be/eJtjKZ-yW4w->
- **Infant brain development**
<https://youtu.be/iLICz3DEjpo>
- **Paternal mental health -**
<https://youtu.be/KSq3N4IErtY>
- **Sensory processing -**
<https://youtu.be/ZkVWSdlmIQw>
- **Perinatal assessment -**
<https://youtu.be/4jbZB-S1YD4>
- **Why maternal health matters**
<https://youtu.be/SXqFga35glQ>
- **Safeguarding -**
<https://youtu.be/ZdKhH3KHf5w>



Fathers Day (20th June 2021)

Fathers' Day mocktail (also great for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers)

Ingredients

- 1 tsp assam tea leaves (50ml tea)
- few drops of vanilla extract
- 25ml lemon juice
- 3 tsp maple syrup
- 1 tbsp egg white
- ice
- 10ml pomegranate juice



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Method

- STEP 1** Pour 150ml boiling water over the tea leaves, stir, then strain straight away. You want a strong, but not stewed tea. Mix in the vanilla extract and leave to cool.
- STEP 2** Pour the lemon juice, maple syrup and 50ml of the tea into a cocktail shaker. Stir the egg white with a fork to loosen it, then add 1 tbsp to the shaker. Shake well until the mixture is frothy. Add a good handful of ice and shake again.
- STEP 3** Double strain into a glass filled with ice. Top up the pomegranate juice with water to make 20ml, then slowly pour into the glass. Let it settle for a moment – the juice will float just underneath the egg white foam.

A few words from a Father...

'How I feel as a dad to be is almost always tied to my mood in the moment. On the better days I am filled with a special fulfilment that no accomplishment in life has given me. There is an urgent joy inside me, ready to burst for when I finally meet my child.

But on more challenging days, that same joy becomes an urgent dread for a coming responsibility that I feel totally unprepared for. Despite all the help and guidance to become a first-time parent will always feel like the scariest of challenges.

What adds to this uncertainty is the pandemic. As first-time parents we expected to have the support of our parents who live abroad. I hope the world returns to how it was, so my child can grow up in a busy external family and experience all the intimacy and security that comes with that, and that my wife and I could have the support system imagined we would when we first decided to have a child.

I wonder what my child will think if they read this in future! Perhaps I'll only show it to them when I am expecting my first grandchild.'

Nick

A few word from the partner of a service user

For many of us this year was a disaster; some people lost their loved ones and some people worked hard to help others, leaving their own families behind who were waiting for them to come back home with absolute lack of information of how it would go... But, on the other hand, for us, it was an amazing time because of the arrival of our new baby! If not this pandemic, then it would never be a proper time for a second child - there was always something delaying this step! After almost 9 years, my wonderful wife gave a birth to our second child on the 15th of December 2020. We were lucky that we made it in the gap between strict restrictions at that time, and I was allowed to be by her side throughout the labour, which took almost 3 days. I am very thankful to the staff of Kingston Hospital Maternity Unit and Perinatal Mental Health Service South West London and St George's NHS Trust, especially to our Doctor (Ms Mireia Pujol-Aymerich) for being so helpful and supportive during our 8 month journey (not a full term due to a gestational diabetes) and the last 3 most hard days. But anyways, the feeling of having our new baby daughter with us, healthy and full of life, was a wonderful feeling, especially realizing she has arrived in such an unprecedented time and environment!

There were lots of questions of how the medication could affect our baby, but luckily, she is a normally developing baby. I don't want to pay a lot of attention to myself, as my main role was to look for any changes in my wife's mood and behavior as instructed by our doctor. This advice was very useful to avoid any worsening of her mental state, as giving birth is very stressful and challenging event. I was pleased to see that there was a strong connection between my wife and her perinatal mental health consultant, based on trust and support, which helped us to get where we are now. It is important to discuss and listen to your doctor!

We are also incredibly happy to have our 9 years old daughter around. We noticed her becoming more responsible and caring after her sister arrived. Now we are a family of 4, with a beautiful 6 month old Princess!



Support services for fathers...

Mind the Dad – Anna Freud Centre

Mind the Dad is a service provided by the Anna Freud Centre that focuses on dads who feel they could benefit from support. They provide free online support either one-to-one or in virtual groups, where you can meet other dads in similar situations, at flexible hours (including evenings and weekends). Some of the support that they provide include:

- **The Reflective parenting group:** a psychoeducation group, aiming to improve fathers' capacity for understanding and regulating their own thoughts, feelings, wishes and desires, and in turn those in their child.
- **Video-feedback intervention to promote positive parenting (VIPP):** an intervention that focuses on attachment and the father-child relationship.
- **Parent Infant Psychotherapy:** puts the relationship between father and baby at its center, acknowledging the need to understand and to make sense of the impact that the baby has on the father and vice-versa.
- **Guided Self Help:** helps the father to explore their thoughts, feelings and behavior and to learn strategies to cope with stress and anxiety around their parenting role.

If you would like to find out more about these groups, please speak to your perinatal clinician or visit <https://www.annafreud.org/early-years/our-work-with-under-fives/our-projects->

With or without Covid-19 as a factor, change into family life can come with challenges for both Mum and Dad. As a new dad, supporting both your partner and your baby, whilst managing all your responsibilities, can be stressful and overwhelming sometimes. Did you know that 1 in 10 new dads struggle with their mental health during this period?



The flyer is for the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families. It features a green background with white and orange text. At the top left is the Anna Freud logo. The main heading is 'Mind the Dad' in white. Below it, it asks 'Are you a Dad struggling with a new baby? Feeling overwhelmed or alone?'. A small image of a pair of brown boots is on the right. The text describes the transition into fatherhood and lists three bullet points: 'cope with your new role', 'understand and bond with your baby', and 'improve your family relationships'. It also mentions free online support and provides contact information: website, telephone, and email.

Sands Charity



Sands is a stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity that offers a wide range of services to ensure that bereaved parents and families receive the best possible care.

Sands United FC offers support for both fathers and family members by providing opportunities to come together to commemorate their babies and feel at ease to talk about their grief when ready.

David has been attending Sands football club after the loss of his daughter. He explained that "Sands United is a brotherhood where fathers, brothers, and uncles can reach out to other bereaved men for support. It has helped me to grieve my daughter's death and allows me to proudly wear her name on my shirt, which gives me comfort knowing I am playing for her".

Contact details: [Sands United FC](#) | [Sands - Stillbirth and neonatal death charity](#)

The Dad Pad

The DadPad has been developed with the NHS to provide an essential guide for new fathers with information on the types of practical skills needed to reduce feelings of anxiety and to build self-confidence. The Dadpad can support fathers by helping them learn about creating healthy attachments with babies, sharing the responsibility to help to develop stronger relationships with partners, and recognizing signs of postnatal depression.

Contact details: www.thedadpad.co.uk

Pregnancy and Motherhood Around the World



Migration from around the globe has created a rich multicultural society in the UK. At SWLSTG perinatal, we provide our services for five of London's most diverse boroughs in which over 270 nationalities reside and more than 300 languages are spoken. To better ourselves as perinatal professionals and to sharpen our services, we have embarked on a fascinating project to explore various cultures and gain a deeper understanding of the nuances of each. We are trying to understand all aspects of culture (e.g. customs, laws, dress, architectural style, religious beliefs and traditions) and how we could use this understanding to provide better quality of care. We are therefore asking our wonderful diverse community to come forward and share the beliefs and traditions of their culture around childbirth. These notes will enable us to provide a better service. Please get in touch with the team via our email: ssg-tr.perinatalswlstg@nhs.net.



Acupuncture for general wellbeing in pregnancy

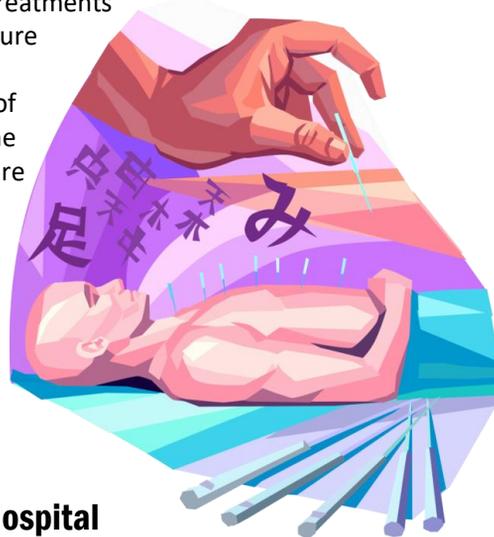
Acupuncture is the practice of inserting fine needles into specific points on the body to help manage a variety of conditions. In the NHS it is mainly used as a complementary treatment to support patients with chronic pain and to treat musculoskeletal problems. Acupuncture is safe during pregnancy, provided it is done by a fully qualified practitioner, and pregnancy related conditions such as hyperemesis and symphysis pubis pain can improve with this treatment. But what is perhaps less well known is the fact that it can also relieve stress, lift the mood and improve sleep. This is believed to be due to the release of endorphins (your 'happy hormones') which tends to happen during a treatment.

To get the most from acupuncture, it is recommended to have several treatments on a weekly basis. I often teach my patients a technique called acupressure which works along the same principles as acupuncture but uses the pressure of your fingers instead of needles. This is a safe and useful self-help technique that can prolong the effects of treatment. A good resource for self-treatment with acupressure during pregnancy and childbirth can be found here: <https://acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz/acupressure>

Please be aware that some areas of the body should not be stimulated with acupressure during pregnancy or while you are trying to conceive – make sure you follow the instructions to practise safely.

For a list of fully qualified acupuncturists in your area, visit the British Acupuncture Council's website at www.acupuncture.org.uk.

- **Ulrike Wirth, Acupuncturist at the Pain Clinic, Kingston Hospital**



Perinatal Staff Journey

Choosing to be an OT in perinatal

'My name is Sharon and I am the Clinical Specialist Occupational Therapist (OT) for the Perinatal Team. When I was 15 my dad had a stroke, although there were no rehabilitation centres at that time, I watched several health care professionals working to rehabilitate him. Including an OT, I never heard of the profession occupational therapy before but at the hospital I met one and as I watched her work with my dad, I knew I wanted to pursue a profession in which I could help people and at that moment I realised that I found what I was looking for. I wanted to be in a health care profession where I could spend quality time with my clients and help them to improve their quality of life in all aspects. Occupational therapy was a perfect fit. I became an OT and went into mental health which gave me a better opportunity to work with clients holistically.

I always had Perinatal at the back of my mind, as the thought of working with mum's and baby was an area of interest, I already had experience working with children (nursery, children's home etc. and had specialised in paediatric when at Uni), An Email went round via the OT network advertising for an OT to work in a new perinatal team, I did not hesitate I applied. And here I am 2 years on, it's the best decision. We as a team are supporting families in the most extremist of circumstances having to deal with COVID-19 and its unprecedented restrictions. But for the loyal and dedicated Perinatal team who worked aimlessly to provide the highest of standards making sure our clients and their families were well managed and supported throughout lockdown and beyond.

I'd like to say Thank You to the Perinatal Team and all it's dedicated workers.'

- Sharon Smith, Clinical Specialist Occupational Therapist

Covid-19 government updates (for more info see [gov.co.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

Step 4 - not before 21 June

Social contact

By Step 4 which will take place no earlier than 21 June, the government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact.

Business, activities and events

We hope to reopen remaining premises, including nightclubs, and ease the restrictions on large events and performances that apply in Step 3. This will be subject to the results of a scientific Events Research Program to test the outcome of certain pilot events through the spring and summer, where we will trial the use of testing and other techniques to cut the risk of infection. The same Events Research Program will guide decisions on whether all limits can be removed on weddings and other life events.

As we move through each of these phases in the roadmap, we must all remember that COVID-19 remains a part of our lives. We are going to have to keep living our lives differently to keep ourselves and others safe. We must carry on with 'hands, face, space'. Comply with the COVID-Secure measures that remain in place. Meet outdoors when we can and keep letting fresh air in. Get tested when needed. Get vaccinated when offered. If we all continue to play our part, we will be that bit closer to a future that is more familiar.



Some helpful links for perinatal mental health support or when in crisis

DadPad

It's the essential guide for new dads, developed with the NHS. New dads will feel excited, but they may also feel left out, unsure or overwhelmed. The DadPad can help by giving you the knowledge and practical skills that you need. The resource will support you and your partner to give your baby the best possible start in life.

[DadPad | The Essential Guide for New Dads | Support Guide for New Dads \(thedadpad.co.uk\)](#)

FNF

It is the leading UK charity supporting dads, mums and grandparents to have personal contact and meaningful relationships with their children following parental separation. FNF offer information, advice and support services helping parents to achieve a positive outcome for their children. As well as offer pro-bono guidance of solicitors and others familiar with the operation of the family courts.

[Families Need Fathers - Home \(fnf.org.uk\)](#)

PANDAS Dads Facebook Page:

Developed to support partners and carers affected by perinatal mental illness, our PANDAS Dads volunteers are on hand to offer support and information seven days a week. PANDAS Dads Closed Group | Facebook

Action on Post-Partum Psychosis

National charity providing support and information for women and families affected by postpartum psychosis. We run an award-winning peer support service, connecting women and families throughout the UK to recovered volunteers, via: an online peer support forum; one to one email support; meeting a volunteer programme (Skype and in person); social groups and creative workshops. www.app-network.org

If you find yourself in a mental health crisis and you do not know who to turn to, South West London and St George's has a Mental Health Support Line for all of their clients which can advise and signpost you towards vital support. Their number is: **0800 028 8000**
Other Crisis Helplines:



text SHOUT to 85258. A free confidential 24hr text support service.



call 116 123. Open 24hrs a day, 365 days a year

If you have any feedback or need any further help with any of the information we have provided in this newsletter or wish to unsubscribe, please contact us.

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[Feedback link about the service \(POEM\)](#)



**South West London and
St George's Mental Health**
NHS Trust