



## Parents in Mind gets underway

Volunteers and practitioners to benefit from NCT's new perinatal mental health training and resources.

**By Julie Clayton**

In March 2016 NCT successfully won a contract from the Department of Health for its [Parents in Mind](#) programme, to train volunteers to provide peer support specifically to mothers with mental health issues during and after pregnancy. It was recognition of NCT's considerable potential to deliver training across multiple regions of the country, particularly to help mothers or partners experiencing mild-to-moderate mental health issues such as feeling low and anxious. With at least one-in-ten mothers likely to have a mental health problem, including anxiety and depression, there is enormous need for such support.

A two-day training workshop for NCT trainers took place with the Institute of Health Visiting in early July 2016, and preparations are now underway to deliver the first training session to peer supporters in November 2016.

Building on NCT's previous experience of training community peer supporters, three locations in England have been selected for the training, each with different community demographics, and strong branch interest in the topic. The first location will be Coventry and Warwickshire, followed in 2017 by training in Tower Hamlets and Newham, and then Runcorn and Widnes.

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The structure and content of the service will be adapted in response to local requirements, but at its core, the project will involve recruitment of volunteers with lived experience of perinatal mental health issues who can empathise and nurture the confidence of mothers going through similar problems. The peer supporters will establish a local support service, in group and 1:1 settings, with carefully considered safeguarding procedures built in. Their training will include active listening skills, how to support mothers in their own recovery, and signposting to local support and care as required. Their role will not be diagnostic, or to replace the need for other services, particularly those of specialist health professionals.

Alongside Parents in Mind, NCT is fundraising through local volunteer branches with [The Big Push](#) campaign, to support the delivery of training that brings together volunteers and practitioners, to raise awareness of perinatal mental health issues and promote signposting and support activities. The aim is to promote and normalize discussion of mental health alongside physical health, and to cascade out the benefits of the Parents in Mind programme in terms of learning and resources.

*'We want to reduce stigma and raise awareness for parents about mental health, to equip them to talk about how they're feeling and where they can get help,'* says Beckie Lang, Perinatal Mental Health Project Manager for NCT. However, at the same time, getting involved in supporting women and their partners through mental health difficulties may also trigger strong feelings and memories for some volunteers and NCT practitioners. *'Learning about this topic may highlight the need for some practitioners and volunteers to take care of themselves. So we need to be mindful of supporting across our network, and that women and partners know how to find information and support whether for themselves or someone they are supporting'*.

## Useful resources

**All babies count: spotlight on perinatal mental health - prevention in mind**, NSPCC

<http://bit.ly/2bNNEtj>

**Perinatal mental health. Experiences of women and health professionals**, Boots Family Trust Alliance

<http://everyonesbusiness.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Boots-Family-Trust-Alliance-report.pdf>

**The costs of perinatal mental health**, Centre for Mental Health and LSE PRSSU

<http://bit.ly/2aYixMv>

**Perinatal mental health toolkit**, Royal College of GPs

<http://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/toolkits/perinatal-mental-health-toolkit.aspx>

Designed for a variety of practitioners working in the field of perinatal mental health.

## **Maternal Mental Health Network**

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

Online network including discussion forums for health professionals, volunteers and practitioners involved in perinatal mental health support programmes.

For general further information key websites are:

### **Everyone's Business**

<http://everyonesbusiness.org.uk/>

**The Maternal Mental Health Alliance**, of which NCT is a member

<http://maternalmentalhealthalliance.org/>

For women to gain information the following are good and trusted sites:

### **Action on Postpartum Psychosis**

<http://www.app-network.org/>

### **Action for Postnatal Illness (APNI):**

<https://apni.org/>

**Best Beginnings:** Baby Buddy app to download on Android or Apple phones

<https://www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/baby-buddy>

### **Maternal OCD**

<http://www.maternalocd.org/>

### **Tommy's the baby charity**

<https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/pregnancy-and-your-life/your-mental-wellbeing-pregnancy>