MATRIx Study
Service managers

One in five women will experience psychological or emotional difficulties during pregnancy and the first year after birth. These include anxiety, depression, and stress-related conditions. Research has shown that only about half of women with perinatal mental health problems are identified by health services and even fewer receive treatment.

The MATRIx study was carried out to try and find out the reasons for this. The MATRIx study also led to the development of recommendations for health services to prevent women falling through the gaps.

THE STUDY FINDINGS

FACTORS THAT HELP WOMEN GET CARE AND TREATMENT		FACTORS THAT PREVENT WOMEN GET CARE AND TREATMENT
• Supportive family and friends • Recognising something is "wrong"	**Women**	• Social isolation • Fear of judgement • Additional personal difficulties • Not understanding the roles of health professionals • Knowledge about mental health during pregnancy and after birth
• Kind, caring, trustworthy, empathetic health professional who has confidence and knowledge around mental health difficulties during pregnancy and after birth	**Health professionals**	• Being dismissive or normalising women's symptoms • Appearing too busy • Delivering care in a "tick-box" way
• Open and honest communication • Shared decision making • Trusting relationship and rapport	**Relationship between women and health professionals**	• Language barriers
• Continuity of carer • Culturally sensitive, flexible, individualised care that is appropriate to women's needs • Co-location of services • Services working together • High quality provision of training	**NHS Service Managers**	• Inadequate workforce to meet women's needs • Incompatible IT systems across services • No practical support to encourage women to attend • A lack of information about services
—	**NHS Commissioners**	• Lack of appropriate and timely services • Lack of funding
—	**Politics**	• Women's immigration status • Cost of healthcare
—	**Society**	• Stigma • Cultural factors • Maternal norms

HOW THE RESEARCH WAS CARRIED OUT

We pulled together the findings from existing research in four phases:

1 We reviewed all the evidence from research studies to understand what makes it difficult to assess, care for and treat perinatal mental health problems in health and social care services.

2 We reviewed evidence on all the factors that prevent women being able to get the care and treatment they need.

3 We worked with a group of women, health professionals (such as GPs, midwives), and health service managers to use the findings from phases 1 and 2 to develop frameworks that give a clear overview of factors that help or prevent women getting care and treatment. These frameworks show 39 factors that help women access services, and 70 factors that prevent access.

4 We looked at the quality of the evidence, and the relevance to the NHS to develop recommendations for practice and policy.
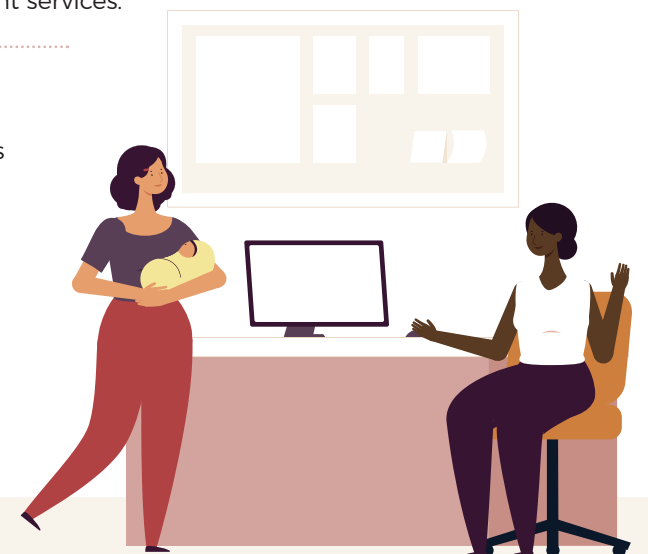
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SERVICE MANAGERS

Workforce
- Provide high quality training on perinatal mental health for all staff who come into contact with perinatal women.
- Provision of an adequate number of staff to meet women's needs.
- Make sure to recruit staff with positive interest and attitude towards providing high quality physical and psychological care to women. Ensure diversity where possible.

Workplace culture and practices
- Encourage team working within and across services. Implement multidisciplinary meetings, co-location, joint working, sharing knowledge and approachability of everyone within a team.
- Develop clear and easily accessible guidelines on where to refer women to depending on their needs. Develop one referral form that can be uploaded, amended, and discussed at multidisciplinary team meetings.
- Employ a liaison person who has access to all systems to bridge the gap between all different services.

Service provision
- Provision of care that meets women's needs, is flexible, easy to access and is child friendly.
- Provide **continuity of care** across the care pathway.
- Reduce language barriers by providing translators or interpreters.
- Ensure that chosen psychological or psychosocial assessment tools are easy to understand.