

MATRIX Study

Health professionals



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 GETTING CARE AND TREATMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive family and friends Recognising something is "wrong" 	Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social isolation Fear of judgement Additional personal difficulties Not understanding the roles of health professionals Knowledge about mental health during pregnancy and after birth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kind, caring, trustworthy, empathetic health professional who has confidence and knowledge around mental health difficulties during pregnancy and after birth 	Health professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being dismissive or normalising women's symptoms Appearing too busy Delivering care in a "tick-box" way
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open and honest communication Shared decision making Trusting relationship and rapport 	Relationship between women and health professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of appropriate and timely services Lack of funding
—	Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's immigration status Cost of healthcare
—	Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 HEALTH PROFESSIONALS*

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS	HOW YOU CAN ADDRESS THIS
Some women believe their symptoms are a normal part of motherhood. This may mean they minimise symptoms or ignore them.	Attend training on perinatal mental health so you know the cues to look out for.
Some women may not want to disclose symptoms because of fears of being judged to be a "bad mum", and being fearful of social services.	Listen to women's concerns and take them seriously. According to data published by the department for education the main reasons for social services involvement include: child abuse or neglect, family dysfunction such as high conflict relationships, and child illness or disability. Provide assessment in a woman-centred way. Explain questions or wording that women are not clear about. Clearly discuss findings of the assessment with women and explain next steps.
Barriers to women disclosing their symptoms or discussing perinatal mental health include previous experiences of being dismissed or seeing health professionals as being too busy.	Validate women's concerns. Take the time to address their concerns and take responsibility for that woman to ensure she is referred to appropriate services.
A facilitator to perinatal mental health care is health professionals having good knowledge about perinatal mental health, services and referral pathways.	Consider participating in continuing professional development activities related to perinatal mental health including participating in high quality training or reading perinatal mental health good practice guides .
Another facilitator to perinatal mental health care is working with other health professionals and services.	Communicate clearly and openly with other health professionals. Take part in multidisciplinary team meetings where these are available.



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