

NCT Press Release

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29 organisations unite to call on the Chancellor to fund mental health services for parents

A coalition of 29 organisations have united to send a Mother's Day letter to Chancellor George Osborne, calling for better funding for maternal mental health services ahead of next week's budget.

The letter, written by NCT, the UK's largest parent charity, has been signed by a wide range of organisations including Netmums, Royal College of GPs, National Federation of Women's Institutes, Royal College of Midwives and Mental Health Foundation, in the hope of influencing the Chancellor before next week's Budget.

More than one in ten mothers in the UK experiences some form of antenatal or postnatal depression¹, yet there are huge gaps in services available for maternal mental health.

NCT research showed that only 26 per cent of NHS Trusts provided a specialist maternal mental health service and just 13 per cent had a full team in place, despite longstanding NICE guidance that all women should have access to this care.

As well as the devastating impact that parental mental health problems can have on families during the first few months and years of a baby's life, recent research shows the long-term costs of these issues are around £8.1 billion every year in the UK².

All 29 organisations are calling for a commitment in the Budget to dedicate funds to address mental health problems in parents, to drive early diagnosis, swift referral and effective treatment. Such a move would provide much needed help to the many families suffering from this condition and reduce unnecessary costs to the NHS.

¹ NICE "Antenatal and postnatal mental health: clinical management and service guidance" December 2014

² The costs of perinatal mental health problems' report, by the London School of Economics and Centre for Mental Health

Susie Parsons, Interim Chief Executive, NCT, said:

“Parents with postnatal depression are not getting the support they need and without proper investment in maternal mental health services too many will be left to suffer needlessly. Dedicating funds to improve services in the upcoming budget is a win-win for the Chancellor, bringing relief to those with this crippling condition and saving millions of pounds for the tax payer.”

Centre for Mental Health chief executive Sean Duggan said:

“At least 10 per cent of women experience a mental health problem during pregnancy or in the year after giving birth. Few receive the treatment and support they need despite clear evidence about the importance of effective early intervention and the benefits of a range of psychological therapies. Our research has found that for a fraction of the £8.1 billion cost of perinatal mental ill health we could fund cost-effective support for women across the country at this critical time in their lives and those of their children. There is a clear and compelling case for immediate action to support families across the country.”

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

- ¹ The signatories to the letter are listed below:

NCT, Netmums, National Federation of Women’s Institutes, Institute of Health Visiting, Mental Health Foundation, Centre for Mental Health, Association for Post-Natal Illness, Perinatal Mental Health Partnership, Family Links, Parents 1st, MumsAid, Mellow Parenting, Dads Matter UK, Bluebell Care, Petals, Action on Postpartum Psychosis, University of Southampton, Imperial College London, Home-Start UK, Family-Nurse Partnership, Break the Silence, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of GPs, Royal College of Midwives, Maternal OCD, Birthrights, The Children and Young People’s Mental Health Coalition, Family Action and Twins and Multiple Births Association

- ² NCT received FOI responses from 194 Clinical Commissioning Groups across England and 193 NHS trusts in England. The requests were sent out between February and May 2014. Key findings included:
 - 50 trusts (26%) provide a perinatal mental health service. 26 of these employed only 1 specialist perinatal mental health midwife or doctor; frequently these roles were held on a part-time basis
 - 105 trusts (54%) said that they do not provide any perinatal mental health service
- A breakdown of the costs of perinatal mental health can be found in “The costs of perinatal mental health problems’ report, by the London School of Economics and Centre for Mental Health
- Spokespeople are available for interview. For further information, contact Martin Chapman, NCT Press Officer on tel: 020 8752 2412 email: martin.chapman@nct.org.uk or press@nct.org.uk

About NCT:

NCT is the UK’s largest parent charity. Each year the charity supports millions of parents through their First 1,000 Days, offering expert information and trusted practical and emotional support through its website, helpline, the nationwide network of over 300 local branches, antenatal and postnatal classes, breastfeeding

counselling and peer support schemes. For more information call NCT on 0300 330 0770 or visit www.nct.org.uk.