

Press release

Date: 10 January 2017

New service launches for new mums in Manchester

One in ten women develops a mental health illness during pregnancy or in the first postnatal year*. If a mum-to-be experiences poor mental health this may have an effect on the bond she develops with her baby, which can result in escalating mental health distress for the parent and impact on the infant's development and later life chances. To help mums and their families who are affected by depression before or after the birth of a child, the charity Family Action is launching a new and important Perinatal Support Service in Manchester this January.

The Manchester Perinatal Support Service is focused on the 'perinatal' period, which means from conception onwards up to baby being one year old. The service is designed to provide emotional support for women and families during this critical time and is the first of its kind in Manchester. The service trains volunteer Befrienders who, as peer supporters, will provide emotional support and will also help families to access support from other relevant services in their communities thus breaking the cycle of despair and social isolation caused by perinatal depression.

Family Action already runs perinatal support services in many other areas of the country. It has found that having Befrienders supporting women within their own communities and homes makes a real difference and has a very positive impact on those helped. Mums feel understood and listened to without being judged. This is so important when a new baby arrives into the family and mum is struggling. Befrienders are able to use and develop the skills they already possess in a positive way that makes such a difference to the lives of the mum and her family and to the Befriender too.

Julie Hayes, Service Coordinator for Family Action, says:

"Although postnatal depression is well documented, it's only recently that perinatal mental health has made headlines for being a major concern for women, families and their children. This is a wonderful opportunity to reach out to affected women and families in Manchester and support them from the very beginning."

"As a new service our aims are to improve the mental health of mothers and fathers and to improve emotional attachment between mother, father and baby. We also aim to enable the Befrienders to grow in confidence and improve future employment opportunities."

The service is supported by Claire Fawcett Brown who was the Health Visitors' Perinatal Mental Health Lead in Manchester and instrumental in helping set up the Perinatal Mental Health Pathway for Manchester Health Visiting service.

Claire Fawcett Brown, Perinatal Support Worker for Family Action says:

"It's a privilege to be trusted by families to work intensively with them at a time when they can feel so vulnerable"

The Perinatal Support Service is currently recruiting and training volunteers in the Manchester area. For more information about the service and becoming a Volunteer Befriender please contact julie.hayes@family-action.org.uk or on 0161 277 6970.

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For further information and interviews please contact:

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Notes to Editors:-

About Family Action

Family Action is a charity committed to building stronger families by delivering innovative and effective services and support that reaches out to many of the UK's most vulnerable people.

We seek to empower people and communities to address their issues and challenges through practical, financial and emotional help.

Our work is wide-ranging and includes help for parents-to-be, the provision of many Children's Centres in local communities, intensive family support, emotional health and wellbeing services, counselling, mediation and therapies, support in schools and financial grants programmes. Family Action is also recognised as a leading provider of training.

Registered Charity Number: 264 713

Website: www.family-action.org.uk

Twitter: @family_action

Facebook: Family Action

*Statistics from Maternal Mental Health Alliance <http://maternalmentalhealthalliance.org/>