

Family Action Perinatal Support Service Leicester – be part of a service that is changing lives in your community

Did you know?

One in six women is known to be affected by mental distress during pregnancy or following childbirth. These mental health issues, if not dealt with, can affect the relationship between mother and child and impact on a child's long-term development*.

*'Out of the blue? - Motherhood and Depression', Mind 2006

What is the Perinatal Support Service

Family Action's Perinatal Support Service in Leicester will promote and improve infant-parent attachment and relationships within the family unit. The service will promote an early intervention and prevention approach for those with mild to moderate perinatal mental health issues, and provide a range of interventions that respond proportionately to varying levels of need.

The service is led by a professional coordinator with a health, social care or early years background, with support provided by a team of support workers and **volunteer befrienders** who have experience of parenthood and sometimes have received help from the service themselves.

We work with families from before the baby is born to one year after the birth depending on need.

Our Perinatal Support Service also works closely with midwives, health visitors, GPs, Children's Centres and existing perinatal teams to enhance what is available to families where mothers and their families are struggling with mental health difficulties.

Why we need you!

Maternal depression can turn into a lifelong illness if not dealt with and it is proven to increase risks to the unborn child and the safe development of the new baby.

Supporting the mother (and father, as well as other family members where possible) and the developing infant through this period is recognised to be a key time for intervention in order to mitigate the negative outcomes.

People that have used our service have told us that they often find it easier talking to volunteer befrienders as they aren't 'professionals' - they are just people who listen and want to help. They value having support from someone who lives in their local community and may have experienced similar difficulties themselves.

Beatrice's story

Beatrice was referred to the Perinatal Support Service by her midwife because she was socially isolated and unsupported in her first pregnancy, having suffered severe domestic abuse.

When Beatrice first came to Family Action she had low mood and often stayed in her room. We matched her with a volunteer befriendeer who visited her at home and supported her as a birth partner when her baby was born. Beatrice attended drop-in sessions for mums and babies at the Newpin Centre and started getting to know other mums.

With support from the volunteer befriender in the early postnatal period, Beatrice went on to establish successful breastfeeding. She also attended counselling with domestic violence services to help her understand the cycles of abuse, so she is able to avoid such relationships in the future.

Beatrice's befriender said: "Beatrice has been on a remarkable journey. She is now full of laughter and is making plans for her future. She enrolled on a free parenting course with a supporting crèche run by Family Actions Children's Centre and is now making plans to start college in September. With support and encouragement Beatrice is making positive steps to changing her life and her child's life forever."

What will I have to do?

As a volunteer befriender you will have the opportunity to:

- Offer parents regular emotional support to reduce social isolation and to help mum/dad be more emotionally available for their baby and other family members
- Observe how mum/dad respond to the baby and offer guidance on how they can better relate to their baby
- Help mum/dad take the baby and other children outside of the home so they can access the services they need - i.e. health services, shops, parks and children's centres
- Give mum/dad support with issues which concern them, for example, by signposting to organisations that can help with benefits and housing.

What's in it for you?

- You will receive full training and will be supported by Family Action
- You will be managed by a professional perinatal service coordinator
- Many of our befrienders report increased confidence, self esteem and improved employment opportunities through their experience of working in the service
- You will have the opportunity to make a difference to the live of people in your community

What its like to be a volunteer?

Sarah, a volunteer befriender, said: "Lisa and I now do so many things together. I see her on a weekly basis, sometimes twice a week depending on what she needs. Every time I do something for her and see her smile I feel so good. Lisa told me that before she met me she was continuously worried and depressed. Now that she has me she sleeps better, knowing she is not alone. This has made all my efforts worthwhile! Through volunteering I have become more confident as I have visited lots of different places and met lots of people. I am a better listener and have learnt how to manage my time. It has also made me aware of some skills I never thought I had. I feel strong and not worried about saying what I think is right."

You can also hear other stories about being a volunteer befriender on our YouTube page
www.youtube.com/FamilyAction1869

Ready to sign-up or need more information?

Complete our Volunteers application form and return it to emily.fletcher@family-action.org.uk and we'll get back to you with more information.