

Perinatal Emotional Wellbeing Service – **BSW CCG**

Background

NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSW CCG) is planning to contract with Bluebell Care in Bristol for the provision of a Perinatal Emotional Wellbeing Service within Bath and North East Somerset under a Single Tender Waiver (STW).

The commissioning of perinatal mental health services in Bath and North East Somerset is the responsibility of BSW CCG. It must commission high quality personalised care for expectant mothers, their infants and families, ensuring multiple providers can work together effectively.

After having identified a service gap for support for women with mild to moderate perinatal mental ill-health, commissioners wanted to develop an accessible service to meet their needs. Commissioners and stakeholders agreed to co-create a new service, in collaboration with three, established, local therapeutic group providers and Bluebell Care. Bluebell Care had implemented a successful service model based on one-to-one peer support (via a 'buddy') and therapeutic art groups in neighbouring CCG areas.

Since 1st September 2018, a pilot service called the Perinatal Emotional Wellbeing Partnership (PEWP) has provided support to women with mild to moderate perinatal mental health needs. Currently PEWP is a partnership of four local voluntary/charitable organisations, three of whom have been local providers of therapeutic group support for a number of years.

The PEWP pilot managed to create a coherent and coordinated service offer in partnership with Health Visiting, Maternity, Children Centre and specialist Community Perinatal Mental Health services.

The pilot has been fully evaluated in conjunction with the partners and it has been deemed that the most appropriate way forward is to award a single contract to a lead provider as part of the locally based collaborative. This decision has been delayed due to the Covid19 pandemic and, as a consequence of this, each organisation has been given a new individual short-term contract to ensure continuity of service through the pandemic. This also allows for further co-design of the service delivery model. The interim arrangement of short-term contracts is due to end on the 30th September 2021.

The Vision

Some women with perinatal ill health will be adequately supported by Midwives, Health Visitors, family and friends. Others will need additional support but will not meet the criteria required to access the specialist community perinatal mental health service (provided by AWP).

Women with mild – moderate mental health needs can benefit from a range of services including group work, one to one support, telephone and on-line advice and peer support which can be provided flexibly and effectively by third sector organisations.

There is still a level of stigma associated with mental health problems in the perinatal period and this may deter women and their families from seeking help and support. Independent and voluntary sector organisations, particularly when led by women with lived experience, are well placed to provide support in a way which women find accessible. They act as a valuable route into services for women who may feel more able to ask for help from third sector providers. These providers can also provide a 'step down' service for women who have completed a more specialised course of treatment.

The success of the provision is predicated on partnerships, marketing and working across clinical boundaries. Women can self-refer, but most referrals come from Health Visitors, GPs and Midwives. A new, longer duration contract will allow the service provision to be further developed and for the service to be appropriately flexible in its response to the restrictions imposed by the Covid19 pandemic.

Scope of Service

The main aims of the service is to provide timely one to one peer support through a variety of methods and the delivery of recurrent therapeutic and creative group programs specifically aimed to:

- provide holistic and accessible care to women experiencing perinatal mental health concerns, in order to reduce anxiety and promote positive emotional health and wellbeing
 - support new mothers to develop coping skills in order to better manage their own emotional health
 - ensure that mums, dads and families affected by perinatal mental illness have increased ability to manage their mental health leading to reduced anxiety and healthier family lives. Mothers and families affected by perinatal mental illness will be more informed about how to access support locally to further enhance their recovery and social networks
 - tackle social isolation & stigma and offer effective mental health support for parents who are often falling through gaps in statutory services and are vulnerable to their mental health deteriorating further
- and
- If/when the mother's poor mental health is affecting the relationship with her infant, to improve the infant's wellbeing by enhancing the relationship between them.

Population covered

Up to 25% of women experience some level of mental health need during or after their pregnancy. While around 5% have high level and severe needs which require specialist clinical support, the majority of women require support for more mild to moderate issues. The birth rate for the B&NES area is approximately 1800 per year.

Conclusion

Given the existing strong existing relationships, knowledge and experience, Bluebell Care has been identified as the only reasonable option for delivering the local peer-to-peer service. Building on the relationship and expertise that has developed prior to and since the inception of the previous short-term contracts, the CCG now wish Bluebell Care to lead the PEWP, subcontracting to the therapeutic groups and maintaining an effective and responsive provision for a period of 3 years from the 1st October 2021.

This approach, permitting timely flexible responses will enable the most appropriate use of funding for the therapeutic groups and will release significant benefits to patients. In doing so it is expected to improve the use of public funding and therefore deliver best value.

For the reasons set out above NHS BSW CCG believe Bluebell Care to be the only capable provider locally and intends to proceed with a direct award. However, prior to proceeding with the award the CCGs would be willing to hear from other potentially capable providers who believe they would be able to meet the above requirements. Expressions of interest should be sent in writing before the closing date of this notice to akilham@nhs.net