

Perinatal support for partners and fathers/partners and carers

Welcome to the Perinatal mental health team's partners and fathers guide, which aims to provide help and advice to partners and fathers who feel that they may need additional support for themselves or their partners during pregnancy and after the birth of your baby.

We are aware that people come from a wide range of backgrounds and families come in all shapes and sizes. Hopefully we will be able to answer some of your questions. However, if there are any questions that you do have please do not hesitate to contact the team.

If you are a friend, family member or maybe a carer looking a for a little bit of guidance this guide will hopefully help your journey also.

How can I support my partner?

You play an important role and there are a number of practical things that you may be able to do to support your partner in this time, such as:

- Take time to talk to her and listen to her concerns and worries
- Spend time with baby. This could allow her to have a bit of a break for her to have some me time or spend with other children but it could also allow you time to spend 1:1 time with baby.
- Spending time just you and your partner
- Support her to attend appointments, e.g. going to see the GP
- Help her to write things down if this helps her clarify the way she's feeling, she could use this as a way of making her thoughts clearer or explaining how she is feeling to others.
- Offer practical support, with the baby, around the house or with other children
- Ask her what would help, what can you do or others? Is there anyone in particular other than you who she feels would be of support?
- It's ok to ask for and accept help that is offered from friends and family, quite often people want to help.
- Remind her of the positives, things she's good at, remind her she's important
- Look after yourself too. Be kind to yourself. Don't underestimate your role, it's important that you also have someone to talk to and are able to seek help and advice if you feel you need it.



Getting support for your partner

If you are concerned about your partner's wellbeing the most important thing is that you talk to her first, from here there are a number of people you can contact for support and advice. Asking for help can be a difficult thing to do - so perhaps you could support her to do this.

- Speak to your midwife or health visitor – they are there to support you and to offer guidance
- GP –book an appointment to speak with the GP
- The above professionals are also able to refer to the Perinatal service
- Accessing talking therapies – these vary from area to area across Essex, further information can be found on the NHS website, talking to you GP or in the information section.

All of these people should be able to offer guidance and support on either what is available or how this can be accessed.

Your mental health and wellbeing

“Research from NCT found that more than 1 in 3 new fathers (38%) are concerned about their mental health” National Childbirth Trust.

This is massive and should not be underestimated. Fathers play a huge part in their children's wellbeing and development, your role is so important and you have a big impact on your child's life so making sure you are feeling supported and mentally well is just as important.

There are ways which you can do this, such as:

- Talking about how you're feeling. A growing or new family is a big change for anyone, feeling a bit unsure, worried or anxious is ok but if these feelings are becoming overwhelming it's important that you share this with someone. This could be family, friends, your GP, health visitor or midwife. Alternatively there is online support available from various sources (see further information section). Also, if you can talk to your partner, sharing the way you are feeling may be helpful.
- Writing it down – some people find this a helpful way to express how they are feeling
- Eating well and exercising – eating a balanced diet and getting some form of exercise can have a positive impact on the way which we feel, this may seem a bit challenging at the moment and could take a bit of planning but small changes can help, such as going for short walks.
- Spending social time- this can be tricky and may take a bit of balancing and organising but spending time being yourself, enjoying a hobby or time with friends, or having time with your partner to be yourselves you may find helpful.



Support for you

Please do not ever underestimate your role, you are equally as important and play a big role in your family. It is ok to ask for help.

There are a number of different places you can go for support and advice whether this be practical advice or for your mental health and wellbeing.

Your mental health and wellbeing:

- The Samaritans 116 123 or email: jo@samaritans.org
- You can also talk to your GP
- Health visitor or midwife
- Talking therapies.
- If your partner/wife is working with the perinatal team we are happy to listen to any worries or concerns which you may have. Although at this time we unfortunately do not offer perinatal support directly to fathers we are able to listen and of course point you in the right direction.

Practical support:

- Health visitor/Midwife
- Friends/family who have had experience as fathers
- There are also a number of useful websites and books that are brilliant at offering guidance on the practice stuff and giving you more information about your growing child. There is further information on these in useful links and websites.



Balancing caring, family, work and finances

Having a family or your family growing in size can be daunting and expensive and finding a balance for both parents can be difficult and challenging, research tells us that financial worries and finding that balance is a challenge more and more families are facing. You are not the first person to feel like this and certainly will not be the last, taking steps to manage all these different areas can seem overwhelming at first, don't put too much pressure on yourself.

Breaking down the challenges you are facing may be helpful. Below are some ideas that may be useful. These are not necessarily areas which the perinatal team offer support in and are simply ideas.

Work

Do you have an annual leave, could you maybe take some time off work?

What about adjusting your hours?

Are you able to talk to your employer? Are they supportive?

Family

Talking to your children about what is happening, the perinatal team have a leaflet aimed at older children which explains a bit about what we do and has some useful information

Don't be embarrassed to ask for help and support. You are likely to be juggling a lot.

Think about what available support you have? This could be family, friends, childcare, talking to the school.

Money

You may need to look at budgeting your finances for a while.

There are people you can go to for advice surrounding money and debt if this is a concern, citizens advice are a good place to start, they may also be able to point you in the right direction of additional support.





REMEMBER!

What works for other parents, friends or family may not necessarily work for you and your family and that's OK!

Finding your balance and managing all these things takes time and managing one day at a time may help with this.



Dad/partner stories

Current research is telling us that partners and fathers can feel isolated as much of the attention is on mum and baby. This is something that we as a service are working hard to improve on including fathers and partners in care.

We are interested in hearing about your views and experiences.

You can either use our feedback form (on the final page of the guide) to help us improve our work, share your story and your experience of the service or just share your views with us in any way you feel comfortable.

We are keen to improve and learn from you so we can provide excellent service to all the families we will work with!





Contact Information

If there are any questions that you do have please do not hesitate to contact the team.

Perinatal Mental Health Team –

South Essex- 01702 538170

North Essex- 01245 315637

Office hours are 9-5pm Monday-Friday (excluding bank holidays)

Father's feedback



1. What is your relationship with the lady we have been working with?	
2. Have you had concerns of your own mental health during the pregnancy/birth? Are you able to share a little bit about what these were?	
3. If so, have you been able to access support for this?	
4. Did you feel supported and listened to as a father and partner by the perinatal team?	
5. Did you feel included in you partners care?	
6. Would you like to have been more involved in their care?	
7. What would have helped with this? Professional, peers groups, websites, practical information, space for me, for information about the service etc	
8. Was there anything that prevented you from being involved? Service hours, other children, work commitments	
9. Do you feel able to talk to friends/family about your experiences?	
10. If we could improve our service for you how would that be? (free text)	
11. If there was one piece of advice you could pass on to a father/partner, what would this be? (free text)	

Please use the space below to share your story or feedback you may have:



