



# PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE IN HYWEL DDA

Since November 2022, health visiting and midwifery clinicians in Hywel Dda University Health Board have had access to the Perinatal Mental Health line, via Consultant Connect, answered by specialist perinatal mental health professionals.

We spoke with Jane Whalley, Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Service Manager, who provides advice via this line to find out about her experience.

## **Prior to Consultant Connect, how would clinicians contact your team?**

'We would occasionally receive calls via the reception number to discuss patients before they were referred, but the majority of the time, we would not have any contact before receiving referrals. Many of these patients referred to our team were not appropriate for the specialist service, and interventions could be provided at Primary Care level.'

## **What types of queries do you generally receive via the Perinatal Mental Health line?**

'We are a needs-led, ageless service, and take referrals for any mother antenatally or postnatally with a baby up to 12 months old. Some Advice & Guidance calls we answer via Consultant Connect are from clinicians who know their patient is unsuitable for our service but want to know where they can be signposted. They will provide us with the patient's background and history. For those patients who aren't suitable for a referral, we can signpost relevant information and put together individualised patient-centred resource packages to support them to ensure that they receive appropriate information. For some patients, we encourage them to try certain resources/interventions first, giving us a baseline.'

## What are the benefits of providing Telephone Advice & Guidance via Consultant Connect?

'The service via Consultant Connect has enabled us to have a dedicated staff member to answer calls from practitioners about patients before a potential referral. We can screen in those who are appropriate for the service and offer bespoke support packages for those who aren't. We can give general advice and guidance for those referrals and ascertain more information as needed.

This is so beneficial for the patients as it puts them at the heart of the conversation as opposed to passing them onto another service. The patient receives person-centred support, tailored just for them.'

## How have you found the implementation of the new line?

'For a new process, it has gone relatively smoothly and has been positively received. We're all learning, new staff are learning, and Primary Care clinicians are learning. We'll continue to grow as the service grows, so it's beneficial for all involved.'

## What has been the impact of the service so far?

'As of July 2023\*, **68% of calls resulted in a referral; a further telephone discussion was required in 22% of cases, 32% of calls were signposted to other resources/interventions.** All calls produced **key guidance knowledge** sharing, as well as **ensuring patients were referred or admitted on the correct pathways**, which has been a key benefit of the service so far.'

## Patient Example

'[Patient A's] initial referral was received via Consultant Connect and accepted into the Perinatal Mental Health service. Had we not had Consultant Connect, we may not have accepted the referral because having the conversation beforehand allows us to use our clinical judgement on referrals into the service, and the outcomes can be as tremendous as in this feedback.' – **Jane Whalley, Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Service Manager.**

'Thank you is not a good enough word for all the help and support you have given me and [Child B]. We are very grateful that you helped us develop our relationship and find depth I genuinely didn't think was possible. I didn't feel like I had any emotional connection to [Child B]. I felt he didn't want me, that we didn't like each other, and that he would be better off with someone else. When we started our journey, I was so sceptical about the process. All I knew was that I desperately needed help and was prepared to try anything. It started with a very relaxed chat about what will happen, explaining that it's not about judging your interactions with your child; it's about helping you to see the tiny moments because your brain is going a hundred miles an hour trying to work out why you don't feel right. These sessions have relaxed me so much as a mother; having honest conversations about the expectations and outcomes is hard, but it makes the process so much easier. It's about being prepared to try because anything has got to be better than how you feel now. And it does get better. Thank you so much for helping us see each other.' – **Patient A, referred to the Perinatal Mental Health service via Consultant Connect.**

\* Data correct for calls where an outcome was left.