

Anniversary Report

September 2021



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**



Established in 1981



perinatal mental health



Our Story

Pages 1-4

Our Team

Pages 5-10

Our Services

Pages 11-16

Award Winning

Pages 17-18

Our Impact

Pages 19-24

Our Feedback

Pages 25-28

A Word from Our Chair

Page 29



"Remember, you are not alone and you will get better."



perinatal mental health

Our Story



The story of Mothers for Mothers starts with brave forward thinking women who had survived a perinatal mental illness. In 1981 before peer support was recognised as a useful tool, these brave women decided what would have helped them recover would have been the opportunity to talk to others who had suffered and recovered. These mothers in North Avon felt their emotional needs were not being met following childbirth. They were supported in setting up the self help group by Bristol Maternity Hospital and started with a helpline. Much of the original operations took place in members' homes.

In 1987 an office was set up at Barton Hill Settlement following a grant from Bristol City Council's Women's committee. Over the next five years the self help group developed and moved to offices at 66 Gloucester Road. The group ran a helpline, visited mothers in the Mother and Baby unit at Barrow Hospital and in their own homes. Pauline Markovits presented a paper at the Marce Society Conference in September 1990. Also in September 1990 Mothers for Mothers purchased their first Amstrad computer and a printer; and in 1994 an IBM computer and a photocopier. By 1991 the helpline received between 40 to 50 telephone calls per



day and volunteer training was held twice a year at Bristol Maternity Hospital. The group began to provide support at local mother and baby groups and monthly meetings for Mothers and Volunteers which included creative dance and relaxation sessions. Soon weekly group sessions were established at Gloucester House, Southmead Hospital and Bristol Maternity hospital. Volunteers also provided support to Mothers in Bath, Weston-Super-Mare and Clevedon. Also in the 1990s the first counselling service specifically for Perinatal Mental Illness began at Mothers for Mothers offices.

"Talking to someone about your emotional wellbeing can help make sure you get the help and support you need."

The tenth anniversary study day was attended by 60 health care professionals and 40 Mothers. Moving onto the 2000s, a move to Colston Street and the start of our peer support groups, Bedminster in 2002 and Barton Hill in 2005. We started a new home visiting service and we celebrated our 35th birthday in 2016 with a big party at Bristol Zoo. We rebranded with a new logo and infograph and Mark Williams became our Ambassador. In 2017 we moved to the New Fulford Family Centre. We opened two new support groups, one in Staple Hill and another in Hartcliffe. Our counselling service developed to offer a specific service for Dads and Partners and to offer Art Psychotherapy.



Over the years many women and their families have been supported and many women have helped on the support team, as trustees, volunteers and staff. There were times when our road was straight, times when it was winding, sometimes we navigated potholes and faced mountains. The twists and turns enriched our story and gave us new experiences which prepared us for the journey ahead. In 2018 we were the very proud winners of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance Perinatal Peer Support Award. We felt this award honoured those trail blazing women of lived experience who started this charity almost 40 years ago.

During the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic our services remained open, some of our support moved to virtual platforms such as daily zoom peer support groups and zoom parenting courses, videocalls and other support sessions available through our social media. We



started our first antenatal support and wellbeing in pregnancy group and we began to offer one to one and group support in Weston-Super-Mare again. For Mothers who were unable to access our support digitally we visited on the doorsteps, often providing essential items for the family. When restrictions allowed we began Wellbeing and Nature walk and talk groups. We had hoped to be holding a big celebration for our 40th anniversary but we are still unsure whether this will be possible. Instead we have celebrated by launching our From One Mother to Another celebration. So far 40 Mothers who have used our support call service have received gift packages and on Mother's Day 2021 40 Mothers received flowers. In June 40 women are walking 40km in one day. We hope to plan more celebrations during 2021 pandemic restrictions permitted including a cold water swim in Clevedon.

We have stayed true to the vision of those brave women of 1981 as we continue to supported families affected by Maternal Mental Illness across Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. We offer support to women during pregnancy and until their youngest child attends school, from illness to wellness, through four arms of our support services: Reach helpline/support calls, Home Visiting, Art Psychotherapy and Counselling, and Peer Support Groups / Antenatal Groups. Our services are delivered

"It's ok not to be ok. And it's ok to ask for help."

by women with lived experience of Maternal Mental Illness.

We aim to achieve the following outcomes for the women and families we work with: Improved confidence, resilience and relationships with children and family, leading to faster recovery.

- Improving children's emotional development by supporting mothers to be sensitive and responsive in their relationships with their children.
- Reduced social isolation and improved social and support networks.
- More awareness of Maternal Mental Illness and the support available.
- Improved care and services for maternal mental illness.

As we write this, our staff and volunteer teams remain working from their homes as those brave women who began Mothers for Mothers in 1981 did. We draw our inspiration from their vision every year, but none more so than the last 12 months, which have been the most challenging faced by pregnant women and new mothers in our lifetimes. Mothers for Mothers has continued in their footsteps providing support, a space to be heard and connections within the community for those who have struggled with their emotional wellbeing during these most difficult of times.



Our team



WELLBEING PEER SUPPORT TEAM



Maria Viner
Chief Executive Officer



Rachel Langford
Client Care



Liz Jackson
Home Visiting Co-ordinator



Abby Akinyemi
Peer Support Worker



Chloe Spindlove
Lead Art Psychotherapist &
Therapies Coordinator



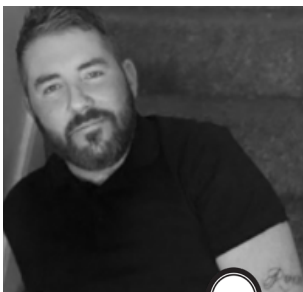
Nadia Czemerys
Administrator to support team



Joanne West
Play Support Worker



Selina Newton
Indian Head Massage & Reiki



Scott Mair
Volunteer



Kate
Client Care



Justine Rowe
Financial Services



Mark Williams
Ambassador



Rebecca Rice
Peer Support Worker



Nixie
Group Co-Ordinator

wellbeing team - a closer look...



Maria Viner - Chief Executive Officer

Maria has been a client, volunteer, Trustee and was the Chair of Trustees for 6 years before becoming CEO in June 2018.

Maria had a moderate perinatal illness after the birth of her second son and began to use Mothers for Mothers helpline, groups and counselling service. During her pregnancy with her daughter she became more ill and was severely ill after her birth. Mothers for Mothers continued to support Maria through this until she had fully recovered.

Maria is a member of the Royal College of Obstetrician and Gynaecologists Women's Network and the Women's Voices Panel. She is a member of the RCOG lay faculty and a lay examiner. Maria enjoys her role at the College and fully supports the aim to improve women's health in the UK and globally. She also sits on the National Maternity and Perinatal Audit Perinatal Mental Health Sprint Audit advisory group.

Maria's Patient and Public Involvement began in 2006 and she is currently the PPI Lead at the Tommy's National Centre for Maternity Improvement. Maria is an expert by experience and a Maternal Mental Health Alliance Everyone's Business Campaign Champion.

In her spare time Maria enjoys walking her dog and landscape art.

wellbeing team - a closer look...

Scott Mair - Volunteer

Scott co-facilitates our Dads and Partners session on the last Thursday of the month. He is a husband, Veteran, dad to 7 boys and founder of PMH Support. Scott set up PMH Support after experiencing paternal mental issues after traumatic events during deliveries of 3 of his boys, which left him with PTSD and anxiety. After struggling with his mental health, due to lack of awareness, Scott did not know what was wrong. It was after seeing Mark Williams, Scott knew what was wrong and that enabled him to seek support.



There was no awareness or real support Scott could find so he set up PMH support to promote awareness and educate parents on parental mental health while also offering parenting hints and tips he has picked up during his 18 years of parenting. Scott works locally and nationally speaking to expectant parents.

Scott is a member of the Paternal Mental Health alliance, peer to peer leader trained, team member of the perinatal training CIC and a qualified Beyond Birth mental wellbeing practitioner.

Our team



OUR VOLUNTEERS



Gemma
Support Call Volunteer



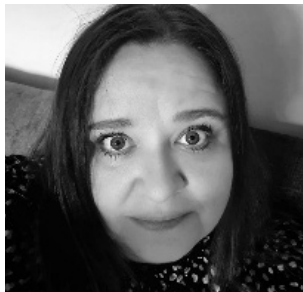
Danielle
Helpline Volunteer



Kym
Support Group Volunteer



Charlie
Volunteer



Claire
Volunteer



Emma
Volunteer



Katie
Volunteer



Jude
Volunteer



Ariadna
Volunteer



Lewis
IT Volunteer

"Mental health problems can affect anyone. You can talk to us without feeling embarrassed."

volunteers - a closer look...



Claire - Volunteer

Claire is a mum who had post natal depression after the birth of her daughter. She used Mothers for Mothers as part of her recovery. She decided that she would love to give something back after she recovered and help other mums in a similar situations to hers. Claire now volunteers, she makes support calls and she works on the helpline.

The ladies she supports find the peer support not only reassuring but also

having someone who has been through similar or the same really helpful. Claire really enjoys building a relationship with the mums and being able to support them and help them realise they are not alone.

volunteers - a closer look...

Kym Birtwell-Thomas - Peer Support Group Volunteer

Kym suffered from PNI with her second child and unfortunately living in Weymouth there was nothing like Mothers for Mother's to offer help and guidance. Luckily Kym had good friends who realised there were issues and supported her through it. During this time, she was trying to come to terms with having a disabling back condition that started during the pregnancy. Despite this, after moving to Bristol she managed to run a successful gardening business until she later developed fibromyalgia which meant she had to give up the gardening business she loved. However, it opened



up the opportunity for a new career where Kym retrained as a counsellor. During her training she was asked to take part in a placement. Kym started on the helpline at Mothers for Mothers and volunteered at group making teas, talking and listening to the mums.

She has continued at the groups and now as a qualified counsellor offers one to one, person centred counselling.

Our team



OUR TRUSTEES



Belinda Cox
Chair of Trustees



Laura Ward
Vice Chair



Emily Matthews
Secretary



Amanda Clarke
Treasurer



Dr Christy Burden
Trustee



Dr Karen Joash
Trustee



Annette Lang
Trustee



Pip A'Ness
Trustee



Nicky Pedwell
Trustee



Dr Caroline Scrase
Trustee



Mel Lloyd
Trustee



Kelly Avis-Hay
Trustee

"Try to be kind to yourself and on bad days be even kinder."

trustees - a closer look...

Annette Lang - Trustee

Annette is a founding member of Mothers for Mothers and suffered Postnatal Illness after the birth of her third child in 1984. She received help from the Mother and Baby unit in Bristol and invaluable support from our charity. Mothers for Mothers was newly established and as Annette recovered she was able to help Mothers for Mothers develop into an organization providing individual support, group sessions, telephone support and helpline with volunteers and support workers. They also provided home visits and counselling services, just as it is today. Annette is very proud to still be a part of Mothers for Mothers and helps with the helpline when required.



trustees - a closer look...



Dr Karen Joash - Trustee

Karen is a consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology. With expertise in high risk obstetrics, medical disorders in pregnancy and medical education.

She is also an expert in maternal mental health and is the Obstetric Lead for the perinatal mental health service and postnatal service at Queen Charlottes Hospital. She currently sees women with mild to moderate mental health conditions in the antenatal service and in addition is part of a joint psychiatric/obstetric clinic to see women with moderate to severe disorders.

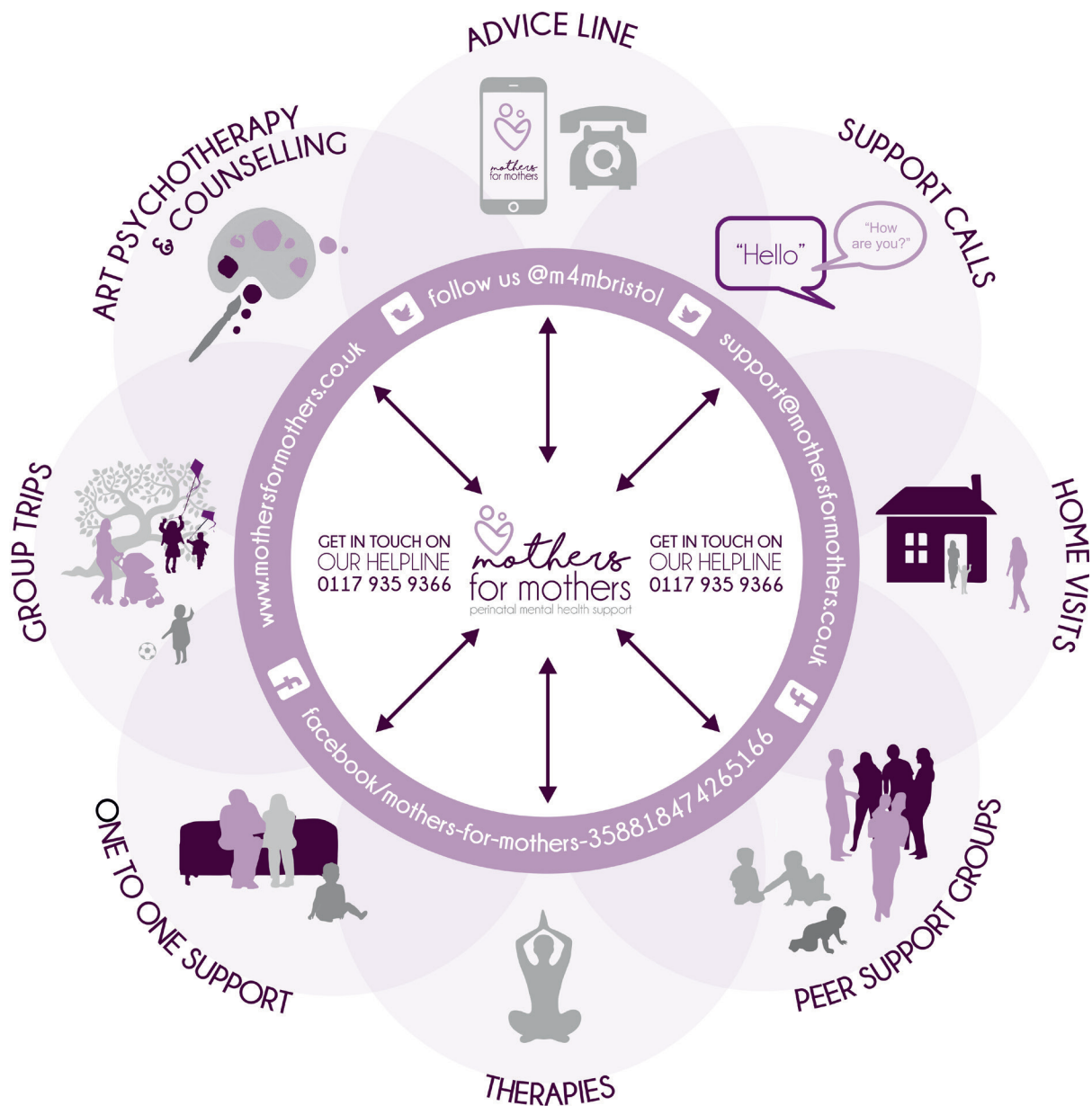
She is also passionate about education and is the director of medical education for the division of women and children. She is also course director for a regional multi-professional simulation course.

In addition she is the Training Programme Director for Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Northwest London for which she oversees the training of doctors in 6 hospitals across the region. She is also involved in the delivery of training nationally in various roles at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Our services



At Mothers for Mothers we offer services to help you on your road to recovery. It can be a great comfort to have someone available to talk to, who understands what you are going through. If you are suffering from anxiety, depression, loneliness, fear or isolation during or after pregnancy, or if you are a partner, family member or friend we look forward to talking to you.



"Telling someone how you feel can help you get the support you need."



We offer support to women, their partners, family members and friends. Our aim is to encourage women experiencing anxiety, depression, distress and/or isolation during pregnancy and/or after the birth of their baby to easily REACH out to us for immediate support. We have many different ways in which we can REACH them. Support is also available to fathers who themselves are depressed. Friends, family and health care professionals may also use our service to make referrals and obtain information.



5 DAY HELP LINE

The help line provides an opportunity to talk to someone who understands what you are going through. It can be a lifeline for women suffering from PNI. It can help to 'normalise' the symptoms and their reassurance that 'you will get better' is validated by their own recovery. Our help line is often the first step for a mother in accessing other services provided by Mothers for Mothers or in their community. We can also sign post to other services when appropriate.



HOME VISITING

Our Home Visiting Service is aimed at women who are too unwell to attend a group or access counselling but feel the need for face-to-face support. Our Home Visitors can offer you listening and planning visits and work with you to decide what will be most helpful for your individual circumstances. This service can help increase emotional wellbeing and resilience, and have a positive effect for the whole family. We will help you to increase your confidence and progress to accessing other services such as our support groups or other activities in your own communities.

ONLINE SUPPORT

Online support is provided via social media, direct messaging, email and moderated discussion on our closed Facebook group.

TELEPHONE AND TEXT SUPPORT

The support line offers women a regular weekly support call or text. This is a confidential listening and planning service. The calls also work to increase resilience to enable you to access the most appropriate services available to meet your current needs. Mothers for Mothers can facilitate where possible to identifying other services you may find helpful and we can help to establish contact. We can even accompany your family to the first activity.



"Mental health problems can affect anyone. You can talk to us without feeling embarrassed."



GROUP TRIPS

We have four group events a year: two trips to local family attractions and two parties. These events provide an opportunity to build your social circle outside the group you attend and give all the children a wonderful fun day. Being away from home with the safety of our support can help build confidence and increase self-esteem.

The women attending the groups decide on the location, usually a local attraction such as Avon Valley Country Park, Bristol Zoo and We the Curious. Our trips take place during school holidays and of course we welcome older siblings to join us. Transport is also provided.

SUPPORT GROUPS & ONE TO ONE SUPPORT

We have five weekly support groups (Bedminster, Barton Hill, Hartcliffe, Staple Hill and Weston Super Mare). Our support groups provide a safe place for you to come and talk about how you feel with others who understand, gain support and make social connections.

Our groups provide much needed support to women and can improve the lives of the children who attend. The opportunity to attend a group where you feel welcome, safe, understood and able to connect with other women having similar experiences helps promote a more rapid recovery from illness. We have support workers who can talk on a one-to-one basis with you, offering support, information and advice. There are also opportunities to access therapies or activities such as crafting. Our play worker engages children in activities such as arts and crafts and we have a wide variety of toys. Our groups offer you the opportunity to make supportive friendships and give your children the opportunity to socialise.





ART PSYCHOTHERAPY

Art Psychotherapy is a talking therapy in which the art making is used as a key tool for expressing and making sense of feelings. It can help support clients to take ownership of their experiences and change in their view of current challenges they may face. The art psychotherapists offer clients non-judgemental and compassionate support through the process. Some clients can feel nervous about using the art materials, perhaps because they aren't familiar with them or fear that they are not good enough, however many find that they build in confidence and enjoyment using the materials and some continue using these new skills after the therapy has ended.

COUNSELLING

Counselling is a talking therapy that involves a counsellor listening to and supporting a client whilst helping them find ways to deal with personal issues. Clients are encouraged to talk about their thoughts and feelings with the counsellor, who will listen and support without judgement or criticism. Talking to a counsellor can help you gain a better understanding of your feelings and thought processes and help you find solutions to your problems.



"Taking care of yourself is one of the hardest jobs, it is much easier to take care of others, treat yourself as you would treat a good friend."

THERAPEUTIC SERVICES/THERAPIES

How we may be coping...

Having a baby, whether it's the first or the fifth, fundamentally changes our lives; our sense of identity, bodies, relationships and lifestyle. This process of change and finding a new normal, is full of wonderful and challenging moments. For some however, this conflict and change, alongside perhaps life stresses or distressing experiences can pose barriers to adjusting and tolerating difficult feelings such as anxiety, loss and isolation etc.

Why we may wish to think about accessing therapy...

If you feel that your mental health is impacting on your enjoyment of relationships, bonding with your baby/children, personality, and everyday activities or interests, you may wish to seek some support. Speaking with a psychotherapist or counsellor in a safe, non-judgemental environment can enable us to develop clearer understanding of and abilities to cope with difficult feelings. Many families have benefitted and made meaningful changes in their lives as a result of utilising the therapeutic services at Mothers for Mothers.

all of our therapies are:

- **Person-centred**

We believe that the client's experiences & needs are individual to them. The therapy relationship is based on honesty, respect, compassion and equality.

- **One to one**

The client and therapist can meet either face-to-face or via zoom

- **Short-term**

We offer a minimum of six sessions with the potential to extend.

- **Low-cost**

Clients are asked to donate a weekly amount affordable for them.

- **Confidential**

Clients feel safe and are comfortable knowing that what is discussed is always confidential



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Mothers for Mothers CEO Maria Viner said:

“Mothers for Mothers are delighted to have been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in our 40th year. This prestigious award is the highest recognition possible for VCSE groups in the UK.

It recognises the dedication, commitment and passion of all of the women with a lived experience of maternal mental illness, who have generously given their time, skills and compassion to support others.

We are so proud that our wonderful team have been honoured in this way. It is very emotional to think about all the families that we have supported over 40 years. The women who we walk alongside on their journey to recovery are the inspiration for all that we do. This honours their bravery.”

"Remember, you are not alone and you will get better."



In 2018 we were the very proud winners of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance Perinatal Peer Support Award. We felt this award honoured those trail blazing women of lived experience who started this charity almost 40 years ago. The coveted award is given for services and individuals who show excellence in the categories of inclusivity; anti stigma; peer support; training and family focus.



We have supported
15,368 Families

31,895

We have made and received 31,895 helpline/support calls



2,289

We have held 2289 peer support group sessions attended by 1363 families (1972 babies and toddlers)



705

705 parents have attended 4013 counselling / art psychotherapy sessions



1140

We have taken 1140 families on 38 day trips and 950 families have attended 30 separate events



201

201 families have received 1064 visits at home

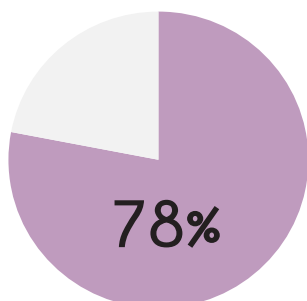
"Talking to someone about your emotional wellbeing can help make sure you get the help and support you need."



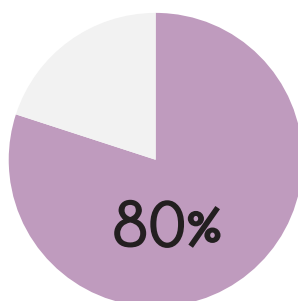


100% of women rated the support received from their home visitor as **'excellent' or 'good'** (90% excellent, 10% good)

92% of women feel more able to explain the way they feel and why to family members



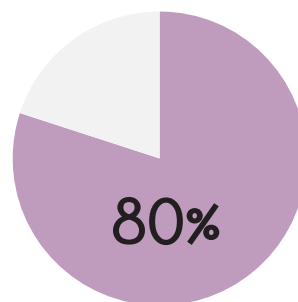
78% of women Strongly Agreed or Agreed that as a result of using MfM service they feel more confident in parenting their child.



80% of women Strongly Agreed or Agreed that as a result of using MfM service they feel less isolated or lonely.



"Mental health problems can affect anyone. You can talk to us without feeling embarrassed."



80% strongly agreed and **20%** agreed that they felt well supported by Mothers for Mothers in their volunteering role.

97% of respondents were referred by a health care professional

91% of women Strongly Agreed or Agreed that as a result of using MfM service they feel more confident to access other support if needed



90% of women **Strongly Agreed** or Agreed that as a result of using MfM service they feel more reassured about what they have been experiencing.



a client's journey to recovery

Engaging



In January 2020 I was struggling to cope with family life, due to ill health. At the same time as being physically ill I started to develop severe anxiety. I didn't really accept that I had anxiety and thought instead that I was experiencing worsening ill health. I had convinced myself that I was dying and I was consumed with this continuous fear of leaving my children. On top of this I was new to Bristol and didn't have a support network. I was desperate for some help and reassurance but didn't know where to turn. Everything was so alien to me and life seemed unbearable. I remember one visit to the GP where I begged for help. He gave me the details for Mothers for Mothers. I was too anxious to pick up the phone but was able to message them on Facebook. They quickly responded with kindness and understanding and someone phoned me for a chat.

From there they took me under their wing and arranged for me to have a weekly support call. The peer worker who supported me had been through a similar situation and immediately understood what I was going through, became my saving grace. The relief I felt at having someone understand was immense. Slowly I was able to start communicating about my health and my anxiety and make sense of what I was experiencing. She was my rock through a very bleak time. She has been able to give me the tools to help me recover both physically and emotionally.

Support Calls



Helpline



There were days when I was too paralysed with fear to get out of my bedroom. In those darkest days I was able to call the helpline and speak to someone from Mothers for Mothers and know that I was not alone. Just knowing that the helpline is there is often enough to take away some of the loneliness of anxiety and motherhood.

Home Visits



After a month or so Mothers for Mothers arranged for a peer worker to visit me at the house once a week. On first meeting her I felt immediately comforted. We chatted and I realised that she had once been where I was, yet here she was helping and supporting me. I was still having consuming fear and anxiety and she offered to come with me to visit my GP and discuss the way forward. This was exactly the support I needed. Her humour and non-judgemental support has held me through the tough times and kept me going.

Finally

Mothers for Mothers have basically been my advocate when things were at their worst and I was unable to see a way forward. Even when the pandemic hit and I literally thought the world was going to end they kept me going. They have helped to shine a light during the dark times and enable me to keep moving forward with some hope that things would get better. Things did get better and I'm now back to a fully (ish) functioning and mostly happy and content individual. I have also managed to improve my parenting skills by engaging in a mother and baby online zoom group which they had referred me to and I followed their Building Children's Resilience course. I will be forever grateful to this wonderful group of women from this remarkable organisation.





"very grateful for the frequency of these zoom groups and the support calls have saved my life. They have been the only consistent and reliable support I have reviewed from any service."

"Support calls offered by Mothers for Mother's have been a life saver! During the pandemic and during my most recent mental health crisis, my support calls have been the only reliable support. They have been great listeners, provided practical ideas to help and general emotional support. It has saved my life."



"The struggles will change, we are here for you good days and bad days."



"Mothers for mothers have saved my life, I would be completely isolated with no support from NHS services or other charities. They have supported me to get all the help and support I have needed and could not thank them enough."

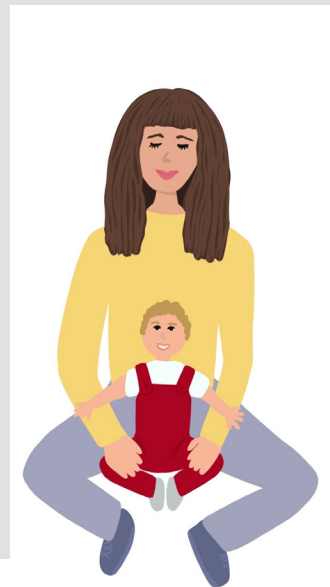
"The support calls were nice and great to have a listening ear every week. The support from Mothers for Mothers was consistent and caring. It was helpful to talk through concerns during the support calls and this gave me confidence to put better boundaries in place in my life."





"The most helpful thing was how constant the support was. Talking to the same person the whole way through every week means you build up a relationship. It also means that you don't have to repeat the same background information to different people every week. It was brilliant."

"The artwork has been brilliant in allowing me to tap into my emotions and that now I have finished the sessions I have physical positive reminders in the art to remember the therapy and to continue in my progress. This will continue to be a source of ongoing self care. Honestly it has been life changing. Thank you"



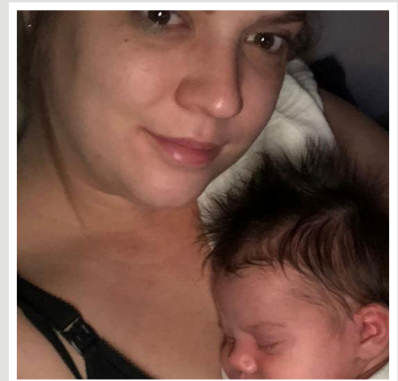
"Telling someone how you feel can help you get the support you need."



"The home visiting service helped improve my emotional wellbeing and helped me to access other services."

My home visitor was a massive help in general and was a brilliant spokesperson for me when the mental health team let me down. She helped me to feel more confident and enjoy my children. My experience has been amazing."

"It was helpful to have someone who can share their story and nice to see that they have come through it and are now helping others. Thank you for being there and for all that you do for everyone."





a word from our chair

I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of Mothers for Mothers in our 40th year of supporting families affected by perinatal mental illness, and in the year we received the Queens Award for Voluntary Service. I am incredibly impressed at how dedicated the volunteers have been over the last 4 decades, and how the organisation has grown into what it is today, with a small number of substantive staff, but still with



a solid and resilient base of volunteers underpinning the services, providing peer support, reducing social isolation, and helping families enjoy healthy relationships. Those who have been involved over the years, and in particular over the recent pandemic, deserve a huge amount of thanks and respect for giving their time, empathy, compassion and knowledge, not just from me, but from the thousands of families they have supported in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. Many of the mums we have supported have gone on to become part of the MfM volunteer and substantive workforce, so ensuring that the expert care they received can be passed on to others in need.

I am confident that Mothers for Mothers will continue growing and developing in the years to come, and am looking forward to being part of that journey into the future.

