

SPECIALIST PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

ROLE DEFINITIONS AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH NURSES

INTRODUCTION

Mental health nurses form the core of specialist mental health provision in inpatient and community settings. In addition to core nursing skills, perinatal mental health nurses have a distinctive role in assessing, collaborating and working with women who experience perinatal mental ill health in their emotional adjustment to pregnancy and infant care, promoting and enhancing the developing parent-infant relationship and optimising infant development. Perinatal mental health nurses need to work alongside, and have detailed understanding of, the roles of other professionals, such as midwives and health visitors, who work with women at this time.

All perinatal mental health nurses will have the knowledge, skills and attitudes commensurate with the **ENHANCED** or **SPECIALIST** level of the Perinatal Mental Health Curricular Framework (2019), depending on their seniority and training. Nurse Consultants will have knowledge, skills and attitudes commensurate with the **SPECIALIST** level of the Curriculum.

For perinatal mental health nurses working in community teams, their role within the specialist service may vary according to the model of service adopted in their area. Delivering Effective Services (2019) sets out three models of specialist community provision: (i) 'stand-alone' teams in large birth number areas, (ii) 'dispersed' teams in lower birth number or very rural areas, and (iii) 'regional' provision in very low birth number areas. The level of independent practice and supervisory arrangements need to reflect the model in which nurses practice. Nurses appointed to senior grades may also have additional regional responsibilities.

Community-based nurses working in a dispersed or regional model of provision may have a sessional commitment, spending the remainder of their working time in a general mental health setting. It is critically important for effective service provision that they are regarded as having specialist expertise when acting in their perinatal role, with associated training and supervisory structures put in place to support that role.

Nurse consultants in perinatal mental health have a specific leadership role across all nursing disciplines (including midwifery and health visiting) to promote and support excellence in education, training and clinical practice for nursing staff. They will have a regional role in supporting staff in specialist perinatal mental health services, which includes providing support and supervision to senior nursing staff in local teams. In their clinical role, they would be expected to have specialist skills in delivering enhanced care in a perinatal mental health setting (e.g., nurse prescribing, specific psychological therapies). They will be based within teams with additional regional responsibilities and will have a leadership role within those teams.

Note: The descriptors below are relevant to registered mental health nurses working in specialist MBU or community perinatal mental health teams (whether stand-alone, dispersed or regional). They are not intended to replicate a full job description for individual posts. They should be seen as identifying the additional roles, responsibilities and

supervisory requirements which are core to the delivery of specialist perinatal mental health nursing care.

SUMMARY OF ROLE

The Perinatal Mental Health Nurse has a core role in providing expert nursing assessment, interventions, ongoing monitoring and risk assessment to women with perinatal mental ill health, as part of specialist multi-disciplinary perinatal mental health provision in MBU or community settings.

Clinical work will be primarily with mentally ill mothers and their infants but should also include the wider family when appropriate. Nurses will have a lead role in developing and co-ordinating care plans, providing psychological interventions where appropriate and working in collaboration with other members of the specialist team and professionals from other health and social care backgrounds to ensure that women receive seamless, high quality perinatal mental health care.

The Nurse Consultant in Perinatal Mental Health has core roles in strengthening clinical leadership, developing nursing practice and improving patient experience. They provide expert direct clinical care (amounting to 50% of their role), leadership for regional care pathway development and innovation in service delivery. The other domains of the Nurse Consultant role include education, research and audit.

EXPERT ROLES OF THE PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH NURSE

A. Clinical

- a. Assess, advise and communicate effectively with women with, or at risk of perinatal mental illness, and their families, to support wellbeing, to help them recognise signs of ill health and to make informed decisions about their care
- b. Advocate for, and work in partnership with, women, their infants and families, who experience mental health difficulties in pregnancy or the postnatal period to ensure they receive the care they need at the right time and in the right place
- c. Using core and specialist nursing skills, plan, deliver and evaluate care which responds to the individual needs of women with perinatal mental ill health and those with complex disadvantage
- d. Assess, manage and advise on the distinctive patterns of risk for women and infants in the context of perinatal mental ill health
- e. Promote preventative interventions for those at risk of significant mental illness and early intervention for women who develop mental ill health
- f. Promote seamless care through the development of care plans which link across maternity, mental health, primary care and social services and which ensure effective information sharing between professionals involved in the woman's care
- g. Ensure that child safeguarding and child protection are prioritised in all clinical and professional encounters

- h. Ensure effective discharge planning which takes into account relapse prevention, future pregnancy planning and seamless transfer of care
- i. Deliver psychosocial interventions and education for women and families as part of a psychological plan of care
- j. Provide expert advice and support to other professionals involved in the care of women in pregnancy and the postnatal period

B. Leadership

- a. Act as an expert resource for other professionals involved in the care of women with perinatal mental ill health
- b. Lead care planning and co-ordination of professional involvement, where indicated, for women with, or at risk of, mental ill health in the perinatal period to ensure they experience seamless mental health care
- c. Contribute to the development and delivery of perinatal mental health education and training for nursing staff and professionals in midwifery, health visiting and social care
- d. Contribute to the development and implementation of local perinatal mental health care pathways, including assessment and ongoing monitoring of mental health, which are evidence-based and adhere to local, national and professional guidance (such as that from SIGN, NICE, Perinatal Mental Health Network Scotland and the Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths)
- e. Work in partnership with local mental health services, maternity and neonatal psychological interventions teams (where they exist), primary care psychological interventions services, third sector providers and other professionals involved in the care of pregnant and postnatal women, their infants and families, acting as a link between services
- f. For nurses working at a senior level, provide a visible leadership role through participation in local and regional structures, such as board-wide and regional perinatal mental health networks
- g. For nurses working at a senior level, have a leadership role in the development and implementation of local quality improvement strategies for perinatal mental health

C. Person specific attributes

- a. Develop and maintain specialist knowledge and skills in maternal and infant mental health, including child and adult protection
- b. Demonstrate an enthusiasm and commitment to enhancing the care of women who experience perinatal mental ill health, their infants and families
- c. Demonstrate a track record of clinical excellence
- d. Demonstrate evidence of effective multi-agency and multi-professional working
- e. Demonstrate effective leadership and motivational skills
- f. For nurses working at a senior level, have additional training or qualification in perinatal mental health and/or psychological interventions, or a clear desire to pursue training

SUPPORT AND SUPERVISORY ARRANGEMENTS

- A. Perinatal mental health nurses working in MBU and stand-alone specialist community team settings
 - a. The PMH nurse should receive regular, structured support and clinical supervision from a nursing colleague who has the necessary skills and experience
 - b. The PMH nurse should receive regular supervision by an accredited supervisor when delivering specific psychological interventions
 - c. The PMH nurse should have the opportunity to engage in peer/multidisciplinary supervision and support through attendance at multidisciplinary meetings
 - d. The PMH nurse should have continuing professional development of perinatal mental health skills and knowledge. Opportunities should include attendance at local/regional/national educational meetings and regular meetings with peers working in the same roles in Scotland.
 - e. The Nurse Consultant will have regular peer support from senior PMHS colleagues and nursing colleagues working in similar roles nationally.
 - f. The Nurse Consultant will have regular, structured support and supervision from the Chief Nurse for Mental Health in their board.

- B. Perinatal mental health nurses working in dispersed or regional models of service provision
 - a. In addition to A. above, multidisciplinary team clinical supervision and support should occur at least once weekly through attendance at a multidisciplinary team meeting either face-to-face or via video-conferencing facilities
 - b. There should be explicit links to the regional nurse consultant for perinatal mental health or other senior perinatal mental health nurse for regular supervision