

SPECIALIST PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

ROLE DEFINITIONS AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

NURSE CONSULTANTS IN PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

Three Perinatal Mental Health (PMH) Nurse Consultant posts with regional responsibilities have been identified in PMH lead regional boards (Grampian, Greater Glasgow & Clyde, Lothian) across Scotland. These posts have explicit clinical leadership and practice roles, at local, regional and national levels, in the provision of perinatal mental health care.

The four domains of the nurse consultant role are:

1. Professional leadership and consultancy
2. Practice and service development, and evaluation
3. Education, teaching and research
4. Expert clinical practice

Regional PMH nurse consultants will provide leadership across all nursing disciplines (including midwifery and health visiting), and the services associated with them, to promote and support excellence in education, training, clinical practice and quality improvement. In their clinical role, they would be expected to have specialist skills in delivering enhanced perinatal mental health care. They are most likely to be based within community perinatal mental health services but will also have a professional leadership and educational role for staff working in inpatient specialist settings, where relevant.

In their role as leaders in education, nurse consultants will make a significant contribution to the development of teaching and training in the field of perinatal mental health nursing. They will work in partnership with higher education institutions and NHS Education for Scotland to influence core undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in mental health nursing, midwifery and public health nursing. They have a responsibility to disseminate findings of research, including new and innovative practice, at local, national and international levels, through participation in conferences and research/service evaluation activities.

At a regional level, nurse consultants will work in collaboration with the Chief Nurse or equivalent to identify objectives for their board area and to support staff who have a perinatal mental health role, which may include providing support to senior nursing staff in local teams. They will share responsibility for regional pathway development and oversight with colleagues from other disciplines (psychiatry, clinical psychology, parent-infant therapy) who also have regional roles. With other senior colleagues, they will lead the development, implementation and monitoring of guidelines, protocols and policies relevant to the delivery of evidence-based specialist perinatal mental health care in mental health settings and influence their development across maternity and primary care, including health visiting and family nurse practice.

In their expert role, nurse consultants will provide additional support, which may include formal supervision and occasional nursing second opinion provision (in collaboration with local team members), to boards with very low birth numbers. They should be supported in this role by other members of their service who have regional responsibilities (psychiatry, clinical psychology, parent-infant therapy). In the main, this enhanced role applies for island

boards, but may include mainland boards who have a regional or dispersed model of perinatal mental health community provision. Need should be agreed between boards jointly, and the nurse consultant time allocated to regional responsibilities tailored to need. This is likely to differ between regions.

All 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.

PMH nurse consultants will have the knowledge, skills and attitudes commensurate with the **SPECIALIST** level of the Perinatal Mental Health Curricular Framework (2019) in keeping with their professional responsibilities. In addition, they would be expected to have the clinical skills to supervise other nurses, to provide local and regional leadership, to deliver complex interventions and to support service development at local and regional level. They should continually demonstrate through own practice the integration of nursing theory and practice. They would usually have obtained a masters degree or be working toward that goal.

Note: The descriptors below are relevant to perinatal mental health nurse consultants working in specialist MBU or community perinatal mental health teams. 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 nurse consultant care.

SUMMARY OF ROLE

The Perinatal Mental Health Nurse Consultant 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, leadership for regional care pathway development and innovation in service delivery. They have an enhanced role in providing formal supervision and occasional nursing second opinions, in collaboration with mental health professionals who have responsibility for perinatal mental health provision in island and other very low birth numbers areas. The other domains of the Nurse Consultant role include education, research and audit.

EXPERT ROLES OF THE PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH NURSE CONSULTANT

(These are additional to those listed in the Perinatal Mental Health Nurse Role Definitions and Support Structures paper)

A. Clinical

- a. Provide complex interventions for women at risk of, or experiencing, significant perinatal mental ill health
- b. Provide expert advice and support to other local and regional professionals involved in the care of women with complex difficulties pre-conceptually, in pregnancy or in the postnatal period
- c. Provide second opinion consultations for very complex need, in support of clinicians with perinatal mental health responsibilities in island and very low birth numbers areas

B. Leadership and consultancy

- a. Have a leadership role in the development and implementation of local and regional quality improvement strategies for perinatal mental health
- b. Have a leadership role in supporting educational and research activities and informal (which may include peer-to-peer) supervision at regional level
- c. Have a professional leadership role in ensuring the delivery of expert clinical practice

- C. Person specific attributes
 - a. Develop and maintain expert knowledge and skills in maternal and infant mental health, including child and adult protection
 - b. Demonstrate an enthusiasm and commitment to providing professional leadership in the care of women who experience perinatal mental ill health, their infants and families
 - c. Demonstrate leadership in effective multi-agency and multi-professional working
 - d. Have additional training or qualification in perinatal mental health or in a related discipline

SUPPORT AND SUPERVISORY ARRANGEMENTS

- A. Perinatal mental health nurse consultants working in specialist community team settings
 - a. The PMH nurse consultant should have regular, structured support and supervision from the Chief Nurse for Mental Health (or their designated nominee) in their host board
 - b. The PMH nurse consultant should receive regular supervision by an accredited supervisor when delivering specific psychological interventions
 - c. The PMH nurse consultant should have regular peer support from senior perinatal mental health colleagues and nurse consultant colleagues working in similar roles nationally
 - d. The PMH nurse consultant should have the opportunity to maintain and enhance their skills through attendance at clinical and educational events locally, nationally and internationally which support their leadership roles.