

Perinatal Access to Resources and Support (PEARS)

Improving access to support for perinatal women through peer facilitation: a feasibility study with external pilot

Women's psychological health and wellbeing matters throughout life but is particularly important during pregnancy and subsequently, postnatal.

A pregnant woman's psychological status does not just affect the woman, but also her developing infant, their connection and wider family relationships. At this phase of life, any assistance offered has the potential for preventing future difficulties for women, their families and society as a whole.

Major life transitions require major adjustments and this is when the availability of support is particularly crucial. If women feel they have good support it naturally contributes to their mental health in a positive way.

Across the UK, there are many health and community resources available, however it is well documented that in more socially-deprived areas, women often do not feel able to access these resources which results in both the mother and her family not gaining potential benefits, leading to inequalities in society.

The NIHR CLAHRC NWC PEARS project aims to reduce the gap by testing whether combining three elements of care(detailed below) which have shown to improve access to services and psychological health and wellbeing in other settings can be implemented locally.

The intervention contains three parts-integrated in a 20 minute session which will be offered to women early in pregnancy

- 1) support from a non-professional peer
- 2) provision of detailed information about existing local services
- 3) help with identification of what would be useful and *If Then* planning (a simple way to help people put their intentions into action)

Peer facilitators will be identified, trained and supervised in order to provide the intervention and then recruit women who are in the early stages of their pregnancy. Half of the group involved will be offered the intervention with the peer facilitator, improving their access to local services and psychological health, and the other half will be provided with a leaflet regarding local resources. After a fortnight, each of the women included in the intervention group will have a telephone call follow up from their peer facilitator along with another meeting in the early post natal period to help them to access the support they require.



Assessing feasibility and acceptability and how this integrates into services, the group (both those who have and have not made use of resources) will be interviewed regarding their experience of the intervention. Focus groups with peer facilitators, children's centre and health services staff will be hosted to gain detailed understandings of how the intervention fits into and complements services.

The aim of the PEARS project is to produce a tested system with a training package for an intervention that is appropriate and that can be integrated and sustained into routine care.

Alongside the work in Liverpool, collaboration across the North West will be implemented to monitor how the project can then be implemented in other areas.

Where are we now?

We started the 30 month project in February 2015. We are currently at the stage of developing the training for peer facilitators in liaison with all our stakeholders and service users.

We are also producing an electronic map and accompanying paper manual of community resources across the study area, We will be working out ways of categorising these and meeting with local services raising awareness of the study.

The application for ethical approval will be submitted in June. Recruitment and training of peer facilitators will take place over the summer, and recruitment of participants is due to commence in October 2015.

For further information regarding the project please contact :

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