

# Peer to Peer Support

## Perinatal Mental Health Peer Support in the Third Sector

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# What is Peer Support?

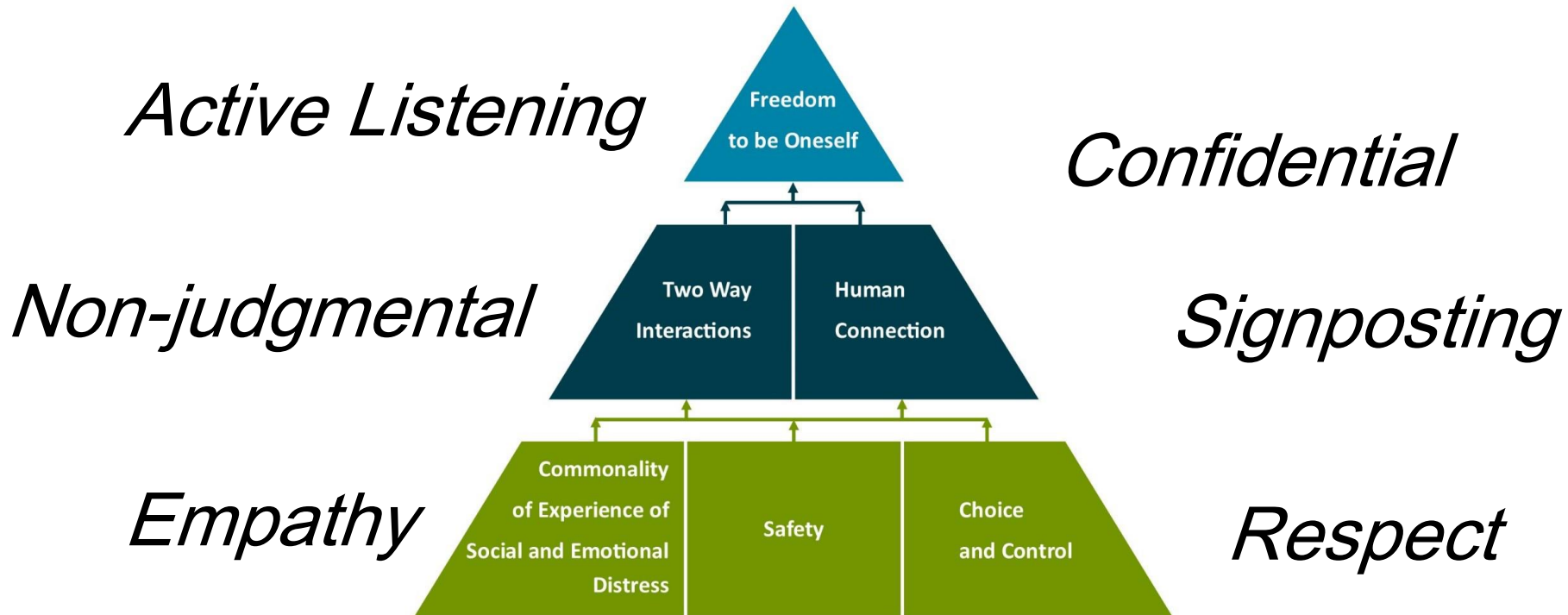
- No agreed definition
- Always based on shared lived experience
- Group, 1:1, face to face, online, telephone...

*‘Peer support may be financially compensated or voluntary with key characteristics being based upon notions of shared hardship, provided by non-professional parties; an advantage point considered crucial’*

Jones et al. (2013) ‘The impact of peer support in the context of perinatal mental illness: A meta-ethnography’ *Midwifery*. Midwifery 30: 491–498



# Core values of peer support



Mind/McPin Foundation (2017)

Evidence suggests that the following are effective interventions  
for *mild to moderate perinatal anxiety and depression*:

Mindfulness

Active relaxation

Psychoeducation and cognitive behavioural coping skills

Mind-mindedness parent-infant approaches

**Peer support**

Reynolds J, Suppiah C, Rosan C. (2016) 'The role of peer support in perinatal anxiety and depression'. *NCT Perspective*; June, Issue 31.



# *We know that...*

- Meeting and making friends with other new parents is one of the main reasons why many parents attend antenatal programmes <sup>(1)</sup>
- Social support is important for parents' emotional wellbeing, and protects against poor mental health <sup>(2)</sup>
- There is a wealth of evidence on the impact of mental health peer support for *other* populations (not perinatal specific) <sup>(3, 4)</sup>

1. Schrader-McMillan A, Barlow J, Redshaw M. (2009) *Birth and beyond: a review of the evidence about antenatal education*. London: Department of Health.
2. Xie RH, He G, Koszycki D, et al. (2009) *Prenatal social support, postnatal social support, and postpartum depression*. Ann Epidemiol 19(9):637-43.
3. *Peer Support: What is it and does it work?* (2015). National Voices & Nesta
4. Billsborough J, Currie R, et al. (2017) *Evaluating the Side by Side peer support programme*. St George's University of London & McPin Foundation.



A range of recent peer support initiatives have been developed in response to the recognition of the lack of services available for mothers (and fathers) who experience mild to moderate mental health problems in pregnancy. Amongst others these include:

### **Family Action Perinatal Support Project**

(across UK)



**Building  
stronger  
families**

### **Pregnancy in Mind**

(Leeds, Swindon, Tidworth)

**NSPCC**



**Parents 1<sup>st</sup>**  
(South Essex)



**Parents in Mind**  
(C&W, Newham, Halton)

### **Mums in Mind**

(Coventry)



# Models of peer support

The Model	Who is involved?	Who is unwell?	Example
<b>Horizontal peer support</b>	At least two peers, who mutually support each other.	Both (or all) are unwell.	
<b>Asymmetrical peer support</b>	A peer supporter who gives support and a person who receives support.	The person receiving support is unwell. The peer supporter is well (or less unwell).	Parents in Mind Mums in Mind
<b>Integrated horizontal/asymmetrical</b>	Peer supporters who lead a group and people who attend for support. Volunteers give asymmetrical support, people attending give each other horizontal support.	The people attending the group are unwell. The volunteers running the group are well (or less unwell).	Parents in Mind Mums in Mind



Two Local Perinatal Mental Health Peer Support Projects:  
**Mums in Mind and Parents in Mind**





# Mums in Mind.....

Helping to make the journey into motherhood a positive one

- Set up in 2013 to support pregnant women and mums with a child under 1 year in Coventry.
- The service supports any mum who is struggling with her emotional well-being , including mums with or without a mental health diagnosis.
- Offers Peer to peer support through:
  - One to one Befriending
  - Wellbeing Course
  - Peer Support group
  - Baby Massage Course



# Evaluation

“I liked meeting other mums and talking through my problems and thoughts with them in a very honest and non- judgemental environment, the support has been invaluable to me.”

Evaluation of first year by the University of Chester.

- Quantitative analysis found:  
A statistically significant improvement in the mums' wellbeing, problems solving and coping strategies and social support following the service.

Recent monitoring over four quarters showed 91 .4 % of mums improved in their emotional wellbeing after using Mums in Mind. (measured using WEMWBS)

- Qualitative analysis found:  
Women on the course were emotionally supportive of one another and built friendships that continued following the course.



# Parents in Mind



- 2016: DoH three year project piloting and evaluating in three areas of England
- Funded to develop a safe, effective and sustainable model of perinatal mental health peer support
- The service provides peer support in informal weekly groups and 121 relationships
- Peer support is provided by trained volunteers with lived experience of perinatal mental health issues (who are now well)
- Supports mums in pregnancy or with a child under two experiencing perinatal mental health or wellbeing issues.
- Groups in Coventry, Leamington, Warwick



# Impact evaluation

- External evaluation by Jenny Mcleish/Prof Susan Ayres (City University London)
- Evaluating: Impact of peer support on mothers (qualitative and quantitative); volunteers' experience of PiM; opportunities and challenges of setting up a peer support project
- Interim evaluation findings show a *statistically significant reduction in anxiety and depression scores* using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS)

Anxiety scores reduced from 12.32 to 9.71  
Depression scores reduced from 7.69 to 5.85

*'It's brilliant what you do. I never thought I would ever feel myself again. It's really helped me'*

- Women also reported that Parents in Mind helped them:
  - Feel less isolated and alone (86%)
  - Know where to get help if I need it (80%)
  - Feel there is someone I can talk to who understands me (86%)
  - Increase service use (85%)



# Challenges

- Creating a safe service (for all parties)
  - Ensuring a sustainable service
  - Meeting the needs of a diverse client group
  - Developing clear referral pathways and strong relationships with stakeholders
  - Defining 'mild to moderate' and triaging clients
  - Ongoing volunteer recruitment: finding the 'right' volunteers
- 
- Practicalities e.g. means of contact between peers and women, appropriate venues, childcare issues, transport issues, mums unable to leave home due to physical and/or psychological reasons.



# Successes

- Strong referral pathways and respected by local services
  - referrals from: HVs, Midwives, PNMH team, IAPT, Social Workers, GPs, Family Support Workers, FNP (and self-referrals)
- Numbers reached
  - Mums in Mind supports approx. 100 mums per year
  - Parents in Mind: 110 women in 18 months
- Positive changes for supported women:
  - Wellbeing scores decreasing over course of projects
  - Positive feedback about support
  - Reduced stigma/guilt and informal networks created
  - Accessing other services and forms of support



*“The peer support helped me in so many ways. The volunteers were wonderful listeners and on a weekly basis they offered great support. The group sessions helped me to realise that mental health shouldn’t be a taboo subject. Knowing that there were other mums who had been through similar helped me to start to overcome my own issues. The volunteers encouraged me to open up to my family and close friends, which I felt was such a big step and one I probably wouldn’t have felt the confidence to do without their support”*





# Successes continued....

- Engaged with mums and families from a diversity of backgrounds including; professional mums, teenage mums, care leavers, young mums, asylum seekers and ethnic minorities.
- Service Development e.g. Stepping Stones Peer group; supported women training as peer supporters (when 'recovered'); supported women joining PiM local advisory group
- Motivated and Committed volunteers (and great retention rates)
  - Mums in Mind – some volunteers have stayed for 6 years!
  - Parents in Mind – five volunteers from first training cohort still with project over 2 years later!



# Volunteer Testimonials

*“I’ve found my place in the world and I finally feel that  
my PND was for a reason” (PiM volunteer)*



# Thank You

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**Mums in Mind**



Coventry and  
Warwickshire