AIMS For a better birth...

Mental Health Support

AIMS provides information regarding pregnancy and birth related topics and supports people to navigate the maternity services (including making complaints). Our Helpline Volunteers (helpline@aims.org.uk) can provide an empathetic, listening ear, but cannot provide specialist mental health support. If you need this kind of support, we hope the following links will be helpful.

The organisations and services listed below are not associated with AIMS and and in listing them here AIMS is not endorsing them, or guaranteeing that they will be appropiate for your needs. We've tried to make sure when we published this page that the links were working and that the organisations listed offered relevant support.

If you are experiencing a **mental health crisis**, urgent support can be very important.

If it's an emergency or you need urgent help:

- If you or someone else is in danger, call 999 or go to A&E now
- If you need help urgently for your mental health, but it's not an emergency, get help from NHS 111 online or call 111

Your mental health is as important as your physical health. You will not be wasting anyone's time.

The following are all further options available to you:

1. Your doctor can help you work out what kind of support you need and introduce you to the right mental health service. This is known as a GP referral. If you are not registered with a GP already you can find your nearest GP here.

2. If you are pregnant or have had a baby in the past year you may wish to contact your midwife or health visitor, especially if you have a good relationship with them and are able to speak to them without delay. They may be able to advise you as to the perinatal mental health services available in your area and help you to access them.

3. You can call a **local NHS/government funded urgent mental health helpline** which is available 24 hours a day, except in Scotland. The helpline to ring depends on where in the UK you are located:

- **England**
  Find details of your local NHS urgent mental health helpline **here**.

- **Scotland**
  For urgent mental health support in a crisis, **NHS Scotland** suggests you phone 111 or 999. There is also a **publicly funded helpline** available in Scotland, but please note it is not a 24/7 service.
- **Wales**
  The **C.A.L.L. helpline** is the government funded 24/7 mental health support line for those in Wales. **Public Health Wales** also provides a broader list of options on its website for mental health support, including services provided to those in Wales by various charities.
- **Northern Ireland**
  The Lifeline service is the government funded 24/7 crisis helpline for those in Northern Ireland. The broader list of local services available to those experiencing a mental health emergency in Northern Ireland is available **here.**

4. **The Samaritans** offers a phone helpline (on 116 123) which is open 24 hours a day. They also offer support by email (jo@samaritans.org) if your needs are less urgent and you would prefer this.

5. The charity **Shout** has a 24 hour text service, available if you text "SHOUT" to 85258.

If you are **not in crisis**, but would still benefit from support with your mental health, you may find the following links useful:

1. The **Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA)** is a UK charity and network of over 125 organisations, dedicated to ensuring women and families affected by perinatal mental health problems have access to high-quality, compassionate care. They provide guidance and tips if you are struggling, and can also direct you to UK wide charities, as well as those local to you, who may be able to assist you.

2. Make Birth Better provides support, self-help tools, and signposting to other services, for parents and professionals impacted by birth trauma.

3. Mind is a general mental health charity operating in England and Wales. They offer **various helplines** including an information and signposting helpline, a welfare benefits helpline, and a legal helpline which are available 9am-6pm (or 9am-5pm in the case of the benefits helpline), Monday to Friday.

4. The charity **Pregnant then Screwed** offers a mental health helpline 9am-4pm, Monday to Friday, for pregnant women and mothers who experience discrimination at work or who are experiencing other mental health issues.

5. **Pregnancy Sickness Support** is the UK's only charity dedicated to women suffering pregnancy sickness and hyperemesis gravidarum. They offer support by phone, on WhatsApp and over email, and also offer a peer support service to help women with the isolation and feelings of being misunderstood, which are so common with this condition.

6. Local councils Some mental health services are provided by local authorities such as your council. This could include services like helplines, crisis support and therapy.

7. Your local pharmacy Pharmacists are trained healthcare professionals and can provide advice on medicines, including those used to treat mental health conditions. Some pharmacists can also offer information on local mental health services.

There are some other approaches to restoring mental and emotional well-being after a birth, that some people find very helpful. They may be particularly suited to those who would prefer not to seek help within the NHS, as well as those who are being supported, or are waiting to be supported, by the NHS. They may also be an option for people who would prefer an approach where they do not have to talk much about what happened. These are called non-disclosure methods. The person can talk if they want to, but the therapy approach does not require it.

These include:

- Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EDMR) which is supported by the NICE guidelines and Cochrane review(1,2). You can find out about EMDR **here**.
- Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). You may have heard of this being called 'tapping'. **This article** explains the approach. Find a list of EFT therapists around the UK **here**.
- Rewind Therapy. Here are two organisations that offer rewind therapy: **The 3 Step Programme** , and **Birth Trauma Resolution.** Here is a **randomised controlled trial** assessing Rewind Therapy for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder.

There is more information about how to reach a resolution after any distressing maternity experience in our book **AIMS Guide to Resolution After Birth**

References:

1. NICE Guideline on Post-traumatic stress disorder (2018).

2. Bisson JI, Roberts NP, Andrew M, Cooper R and Lewis C (2013) Psychological therapies for chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in adults). Available here.