



Improving the lives of mothers and families affected by  
pre and postnatal depression and anxiety

# Dads/Partners Perinatal Mental Health Peer Support Worker (PSW) and Champion

Job pack



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## Job Advert

**Dads, have you recovered from mental health difficulties after the birth of your baby or supported your partner through her own maternal mental health problems?**

**Would you like to be part of an award winning, supportive, flexible and family friendly team, using your experience in this innovative new role to make a real difference for dads/partners across Birmingham and Solihull who are struggling perinatal mental health problems?**

Many families experience perinatal mental health problems and whilst mums often access the appropriate services to help them, partners and especially dads tend to be much more reluctant to seek out help.

In response to this, and in partnership with the NHS specialist perinatal mental teams based in Birmingham and Solihull, we currently have an exciting opportunity for a self-motivated and enthusiastic individual to join our committed team in the brand-new role of Partners Perinatal Mental Health Peer Support Worker and Champion. Employed by Acacia, this innovative new role is attached to and will be based alongside the NHS specialist perinatal mental health community teams. The 2 key functions of the post include:

- Providing individual peer support to partners of the mothers who are referred to the Birmingham and Solihull specialist perinatal mental health teams. Using your own experiences of mental health and fatherhood, you will help to reduce barriers and encourage partners who are experiencing their own perinatal mental health problems to seek help and engage with services. You will also be able to draw on personal experience in a supportive and positive manner to help others in similar circumstances and be able to communicate personal perspectives or experiences in a way which is helpful for both.
- The PSW will also work within Acacia Family Support to lead and develop the Acacia dads'/partners' services.

We are looking for a self-motivated person who has personal lived experience of perinatal mental health problems. The successful applicant will need to be innovative, outgoing and comfortable talking to others. A car driver with access to their own transport is desirable.

If this sounds like you, we would love to hear from you.

This is a full-time position and is funded for 12 months initially. Salary is £24,000 per annum.

*In light of the nature of this role, there is a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) that the role is undertaken by a man (in accordance with Para1, Schedule 9 of the Equality Act 2010).*

**The closing date for application is Midnight on 8th October 2021. However, as we need to fill this position quickly, we strongly recommend that you apply as soon as possible as we may close the vacancy early if we receive a good early response.**

**We particularly welcome applicants from black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates and candidates with disabilities, because we would like to increase the representation of these groups at Acacia.**

## Context

Recent research reveals that up to one in 10 dads/partners will develop postnatal illnesses including not just depression/anxiety but also other perinatal conditions like OCD and post-traumatic stress disorder relating to the birth. Many partners find it hard to talk about such feelings and bottle them up for quite a long period of time. They may then go on to express their feelings in a variety of different ways which are not recognised as symptoms of a mood disorder. So often dad's/partners perinatal mental health problems are not recognised and even where they are men rarely engage with support services.

Acacia has been providing a dads'/partners' support service for many years and has recognised the need to improve engagement with partners. This is now one of the perinatal mental health priorities of the NHS long term plan and as a result the Birmingham and Solihull United Maternity and New-born Partnership has partnered with Acacia developing this project to address that need.

This is an unusual role in that whilst you will be an employee of Acacia Family Support and be an integral part of our team (line managed by Acacia's Operations Director), you will also be a key member of the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Community Teams and will work closely with them. It is envisaged that you will share office space with community teams as well as Acacia. Initially the role will be split working 3 days within the specialist teams and 2 days focussing on developing the Acacia dads'/partners' work. The role will probably also include some work at the Barberry Centre.

The post-holder will be required to work as part of an NHS multidisciplinary team supporting partners in the community, providing support within an agreed timeframe. The role incorporates elements of advocacy, peer support and signposting to community resources as appropriate. The post-holder will be based within the community team but will be required to build and maintain other strong connections to enable them in their role. As a new role the post-holder will be required to shape and develop the partners' peer support approach within perinatal mental health services based on ongoing learning about what is helpful and successful. They will work closely with the Acacia dads' service to lead and develop this work.

## The Partnership

### About Acacia Family Support

Acacia Family Support is an award-winning Birmingham based Christian charity that offers a range of support services to mothers and families that are affected by perinatal mental health issues in Birmingham. We pride ourselves on being a supportive, flexible and family friendly organisation who really cares about our staff and volunteers. Acacia Family Support is a registered charity and Company Limited by Guarantee. Established in 2004, Acacia's mission is to: **"Improve the lives of mothers and families affected by pre and postnatal depression and anxiety (PND/A)"**.

Mental health problems are common both during pregnancy and following childbirth and can be very serious. Perinatal mental health has been recognised in recent years as a major public health concern. The most common perinatal mental health problem is postnatal depression/anxiety (PND/A), with rates ranging between 13% in the first few weeks to 20% in the first year after the birth.

In response to this, we deliver support services to mothers and families across Birmingham affected by pre and postnatal depression and anxiety. Support services include (all free of charge):

- Befriending - predominantly listening support using common factor skills with a compassionate focus, problem solving, support adjusting to becoming a mum etc. Signposting, organising respite care, advocacy work

- Group work: workshops looking at strategies to help overcome low mood and anxiety using cognitive behavioural techniques with a session focusing purely on strengthening relationships
- Childcare: crèche facility at our delivery centres whilst mothers access support
- Helping Hands at Home Service: practical and emotional support in the home environment
- Dads' support: 1-1 Befriending and signposting
- Specialist support for young parents
- Face to face services are delivered across Birmingham from 4 localities

Acacia is a volunteer led organisation that uses a team of 50+ trained volunteers and almost 30 staff, most with lived experience of mental health issues, to deliver weekly individual befriending sessions and other types of support. A significant feature of Acacia's work is the ability to offer a level of additional support and hospitality that goes beyond 'mainstream' provision. Specifically, Acacia works to alleviate the barriers to engaging with services, providing free childcare at an onsite crèche and assistance with transportation costs.

Acacia Family Support is a Christian organisation and our services are open to families of all faiths or none. Our main office is in Sutton Coldfield and we deliver services across the whole of Birmingham.

## Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Community Service

The Perinatal Mental Health Service in Birmingham provides a multi-disciplinary, regional service throughout the West Midlands, to treat mothers with mental health problems, both during pregnancy and in the first-year post-partum. There are community outreach teams as well as a 10 inpatient bedded Unit at the Barberry.

## More about the role

Perinatal mental health problems can feel isolating, debilitating, and at worst, unendurable. Adapting to life as a new parent can be very challenging, especially in the face of an expectation that having a baby should be the happiest time in a parent's life. New parents normally experiencing quite a lot of sleep disturbance and changes in normal routine in the early weeks and months. On top of these and other normal worries that many new parents have to deal with, it can feel that a wife or partner has now become a different person. Partners may feel emotionally neglected and physically rejected. The wife/partner may have become irritable, hostile and abusive at times. Conflict and guilt combined with hormonal changes, stress and a variety of other pressures can have a very detrimental effect on the partner's mental wellbeing.

Dads/partners may develop their own mental health problems which may show themselves through irritability and short temper to those around them such as family, friends and work colleagues. Some people may drink more alcohol or take other drugs in an attempt to deal with these feelings. They may also seek out increasingly risky activities. The combination of these mean that they are less likely to be seen as depressed by those around them and are less likely to seek appropriate help and treatment in dealing with their depression. It is believed that around one in ten new dads/partners experience perinatal mental health problems and unfortunately partners are even less likely than mums to talk about these problems and to access the support they need.

As part of a new initiative within the specialist perinatal mental health service, partners of women that access specialist services will now be assessed to identify whether they have signs of developing their own mental health problems. The new role of partners PSW will include engaging with these partners in an attempt to support them to get the help and support they need.

Through sharing experiences of mental health and parenthood, peer support can help counter some of the feelings of isolation and failure that partners may experience and the obstacles which prevent them from accessing help. The role of peer support worker has been developed specifically for people who have lived experience of mental health

problems during or directly following pregnancy. Through sharing wisdom from their own experiences, Peer Support Workers will develop rapport and instil hope and the knowledge that recovery is possible.

As an integral and highly valued member of the multi-disciplinary team, the PSW will provide peer support and practical assistance to partners of clients accessing perinatal services in order for them to recognise their own struggles, access appropriate services and restore hope. Within a relationship of mutuality and information sharing, they will promote choice, self-determination and positive living for both the partners they support and their wider family networks. The PSW will promote engagement, choice, self-determination and connection to local communities. This will include helping partners connect or re-connect with support networks and establish their own coping strategies.

Leading and developing the Acacia dads'/partners' support team will also be an essential part of the role. An important aspect of this work will involve the development of online resources and support for dads/partners. Web based communication has been identified as a preferred method of engagement for many dads/partners.

## Primary Duties and Responsibilities

**The Partners Peer Support Worker (PSW) will provide practical assistance, advice and peer support to partners affected by perinatal mental health issues. They will lead and support the development and delivery of a wide range of interventions and encourage partners to engage in support activities and opportunities to aid their recovery and remain well - modelling personal responsibility, self-awareness, self-belief, self-advocacy and hopefulness. This exciting position will integrate 2 roles working within Acacia and the NHS specialist teams to lead and develop the dads'/partners' pathway and support.**

- To directly support men/partners to engage with perinatal mental health support services
  - To establish supportive and respectful relationships with partners of women using perinatal mental health services, sharing ideas about ways of achieving recovery goals, drawing on personal experiences and a range of coping, self-help and self-management techniques
  - To signpost to various resources, opportunities and activities within the Trust and in communities to promote choice and informed decision making
  - Where appropriate to accompany service users to appointments/meetings/activities of their choice and perform a range of practical tasks aligned to recovery goals
  - To act as a leader/champion for dads'/partners' perinatal mental health
  - To help build and develop the Acacia dads'/partners' service
  - To work with the team to develop online resources, education and awareness programmes
  - To raise awareness of partners' perinatal mental health problems in the community encouraging men/partners to seek help
  - Where appropriate to accompany partners to appointments/meetings/activities of their choice
  - Being actively involved in the continued development of the partners PSW role and in the ongoing evaluation of the role
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- Abiding by the Draft Conduct Principles and Guideline for Peer Support Workers, so that the central focus of work, inspiring recovery, is not compromised in any way.
  - Understanding and working to Acacia and the Trust's policies and procedures eg child protection, health and safety, confidentiality and to feed back any concerns to your Line Manager
  - Regularly travelling across Birmingham to fulfil this role

## Knowledge and Experience:

- To have lived experience of mental health problems and parenthood
- To have experience of recovery to a meaningful life
- To have experience of being in a supportive and enabling role
- To be computer literate in Microsoft Office and social media
- Ability to share personal story of recovery in a professional manner
- Ability and willingness to reflect on work practice and be open to constructive feedback
- Ability to work in an enabling and creative way
- Willingness to support people with a range of needs to meet their recovery goals
- Ability to manage stress and to plan and prioritise workload
- Ability to maintain a healthy home/work life balance
- Critical/creative thinker
- Understanding and practical knowledge of recovery
- Understanding of the issues and concerns of parents experiencing perinatal mental health problems
- Knowledge and commitment to service users' rights
- Understanding of the impact of stigma and discrimination
- Knowledge of Mental Health Legislation
- Knowledge of local policies in respect of safeguarding children and the protection of vulnerable adults
- Ability to organise and plan own work activities
- Good communication is key and the successful applicant will need to be able to communicate effectively with a range of service users, carers, professionals (ward and community teams) and external agencies and to work well in a team, able to manage and respond well to conflict.

## Additional Information

### Emotional Impact

The role is emotionally demanding due to the nature of distress experienced by service users and the Peer Supporter's own lived experience. Issues may be encountered which may be emotionally distressing for the workers involved. This needs to be carefully considered by the applicant before applying for this post.

Clinical supervision will be provided by the Trust and pastoral supervision will be provided by Acacia Family Support. The PSW must remain committed to attend supervision and peer support development days.

### Safeguarding

All employees are responsible for taking all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children and vulnerable adults are minimised. They should take all appropriate actions to address concerns, working to agreed local policies, procedures, and guidance on Safeguarding, in partnership with other relevant agencies. This includes accessing appropriate training, advice, and support.

## Disclosure and Barring Services

The post will be subject to a DBS Disclosure check at the point of recruitment and thereafter as per Acacia policy.

## Policies and Procedures

The duties and responsibilities of the post must be undertaken in accordance with the Policies and Procedures of Acacia Family Support and the Trust.

## Other duties

This is a brand new position and will be evolving as it develops so it is difficult to be definitive about all of the duties the role will entail. Inevitably from time to time the post holder may be required to perform duties for the post other than those given in the job description at the discretion of the Manager or Trustees without changing the general character of the duties or the level of responsibility entailed.

# Role Specification for Recruitment/Interview

Person Specification			Assessed by
Knowledge & Qualifications	Desirable	Essential	
NVQ Level 3 or equivalent	X		All through application and interview
Experience of working within a mental health setting	X		
Some knowledge of the long-term impact of maternal mental health issues (in particular postnatal depression/anxiety)	X		
Personal experience, and recovery from mental illness preferably perinatal mental illness		X	
Experience of being a parent		X	
Able to draw on personal experience in a supportive and positive manner to help others in similar circumstances		X	
Able to communicate personal perspectives or experiences in a way which is helpful for both team members and fathers/partners		X	
Skills & Experience			All through application and interview
Experience of work within a mental health or support service context	X		
Experience of implementing new projects and services	X		
Experience of recording and maintaining up to date paper and electronic records	X		
Skills in self-management, including time management		X	
Computer literacy skills (including Word, email, Outlook, databases) and willing to use these packages and others of a similar nature in the course of duties		X	
Ability to work in a culturally sensitive manner.		X	
Good communication and listening skills together with a good standard of written communication		X	
Ability to manage, plan and prioritise a caseload based on working hours and service demand.		X	
Experience of carrying out assessments and care planning	X		
Ability to informally assess risk including child and adult safeguarding		X	
Personal qualities			All through application and interview
An understanding of and commitment to Acacia's ethos and values		X	
Creative thinker		X	
Problem-solving capabilities		X	
Excellent inter-personal skills		X	
Good networker and team player		X	
Enthusiastic and motivated		X	
Ability to work on own initiative, planning and prioritising workload		X	
Act with discretion and retain confidentiality		X	
Flexible, calm under pressure.		X	