

# Perinatal mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic

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# Factors impacting perinatal mental health during the pandemic

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## UK lockdown: Calls to domestic abuse helpline jump by half

26 April

Coronavirus pandemic

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### Research

#### Characteristics and outcomes of pregnant women admitted to hospital with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection in UK: national population based cohort study

BMJ 2020 ; 369 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m2107> (Published 08 June 2020)

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2020;369:m2107

Meta-Analysis > CMAJ. 2021 Apr 19;193(16):E540-E548. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.202604.

Epub 2021 Mar 19.

#### The impact of COVID-19 on pregnancy outcomes: a systematic review and meta-analysis

Shu Qin Wei <sup>1</sup>, Marianne Bilodeau-Bertrand <sup>1</sup>, Shiliang Liu <sup>1</sup>, Nathalie Auger <sup>2</sup>

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### How many children at risk? UK health visitors count the cost of lockdown

Professionals supporting families worry they may not be picking up issues such as mental ill health and domestic abuse



News > Health

## High-risk drinking doubles during lockdown, new figures show

'More lives will be needlessly lost to addiction unless the government acts now and commits to substantial investment in public health'

Tim Wyatt | Tuesday 15 September 2020 10:50



# COVID-19 and perinatal mental health

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**Increased levels of anxiety and depression symptoms in pregnant and postnatal women during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic.**

*Shorey, et al. Anxiety and depressive symptoms of women in the perinatal period during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Scand J Public Health. 2021*

*Hessami, et al. COVID-19 pandemic and maternal mental health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. J Matern Fetal Neonatal Med. 2020*





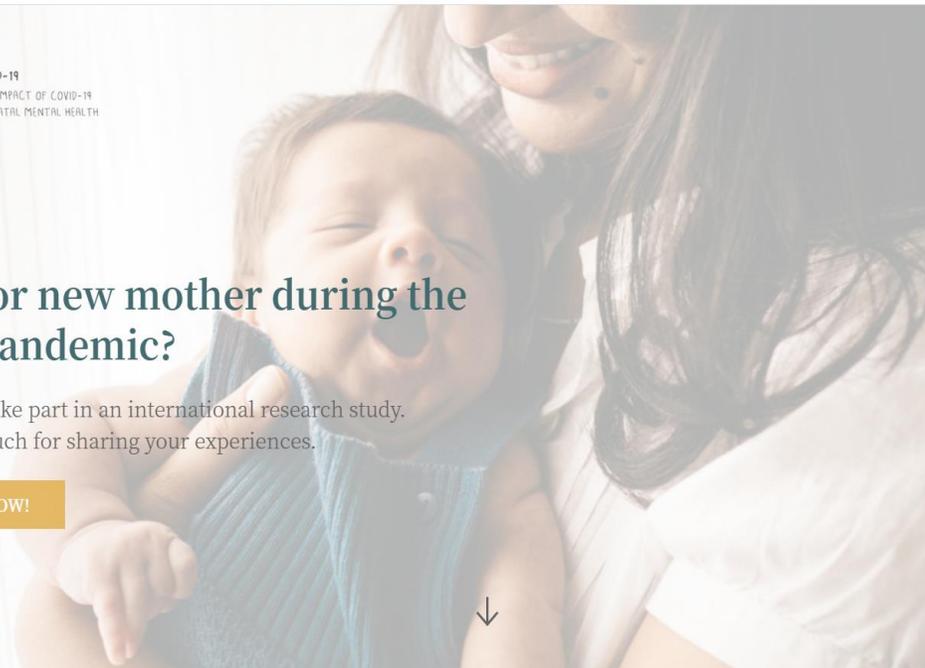
RISEUP PPD-COVID-19  
INVESTIGATION OF IMPACT OF COVID-19  
PANDEMIC IN PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH

RESEARCH

## Pregnant or new mother during the covid-19 pandemic?

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STUDY PROTOCOL

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## Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on perinatal mental health (Riseup-PPD-COVID-19): protocol for an international prospective cohort study

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### Abstract

**Background:** Corona Virus Disease 19 (COVID-19) is a new pandemic, declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organization, which could have negative consequences for pregnant and postpartum women. The scarce evidence published to date suggests that perinatal mental health has deteriorated since the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the few studies published so far have some limitations, such as a cross-sectional design and the omission of important factors for the understanding of perinatal mental health, including governmental restriction measures and healthcare practices implemented at the maternity hospitals. Within the Riseup-PPD COST Action, a study is underway to assess the impact of COVID-19 in perinatal mental health. The primary objectives are to (1) evaluate changes in perinatal mental health outcomes; and (2) determine the risk and protective factors for perinatal mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, we will compare the results between the countries participating in the study.

**Methods:** This is an international prospective cohort study, with a baseline and three follow-up assessments over a six-month period. It is being carried out in 11 European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom), Argentina, Brazil and Chile. The sample consists of adult pregnant and postpartum women (with infants up to 6 months of age). The assessment includes measures on COVID-19 epidemiology and public health measures (Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker dataset), Coronavirus Perinatal Experiences (COPE questionnaires), psychological distress (BSI-18), depression (EPDS), anxiety (GAD-7) and post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSD checklist for DSM-V).

(Continued on next page)

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# COVID-19 and perinatal mental health services in the UK: findings from a mixed methods study of mental health care staff

- Online survey open to all mental health care staff 22 Apr-12 May 2020.
- N=363 staff working with perinatal women: 85% female, 70% White British, 91% NHS.
- N=56 working only in perinatal services; N=18 in MBU.

Original Paper | [Open Access](#) | Published: 28 August 2020

Impact on mental health care and on mental health service users of the COVID-19 pandemic: a mixed methods survey of UK mental health care staff

[Sonia Johnson](#), [Christian Dalton-Locke](#) , [Norha Vera San Juan](#), [Una Foye](#), [Sian Oram](#), [Alexandra Papamichail](#), [Sabine Landau](#), [Rachel Rowan Olive](#), [Tamar Jaynes](#), [Prisha Shah](#), [Luke Sheridan Rains](#), [Brynmor Lloyd-Evans](#), [Sarah Carr](#), [Helen Killaspy](#), [Steve Gillard](#), [Alan Simpson](#) & [The COVID-19 Mental Health Policy Research Unit Group](#)

*Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 56, 25–37 (2021) | [Cite this article](#)

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Archives of Women's Mental Health  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-021-01108-5>

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Challenges and opportunities of the COVID-19 pandemic for perinatal mental health care: a mixed-methods study of mental health care staff

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore staff perceptions of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health service delivery and outcomes for women who were pregnant or in the first year after birth ('perinatal' women). Secondary analysis was undertaken of an online mixed-methods survey open to all mental health care staff in the UK involving 363 staff working with women in the perinatal period. Staff perceived the mental health of perinatal women to be particularly vulnerable to the impact of stressors associated with the pandemic such as social isolation (rated by 79.3% as relevant or extremely relevant; 288/363) and domestic violence and abuse (53.3%; 192/360). As a result of changes to mental health and other health and social care services, staff reported feeling less able to assess women, particularly their relationship with their baby (43.3%; 90/208), and to mobilise safeguarding procedures (29.4%; 62/211). While 42% of staff reported that some women engaged poorly with virtual appointments, they also found flexible remote consulting to be beneficial for some women and helped time management due to reductions in travel time. Delivery of perinatal care needs to be tailored to women's needs; virtual appointments are perceived not to be appropriate for assessments but may be helpful for some women in subsequent interactions. Safeguarding and other risk assessment procedures must remain robust in spite of modifications made to service delivery during pandemics.

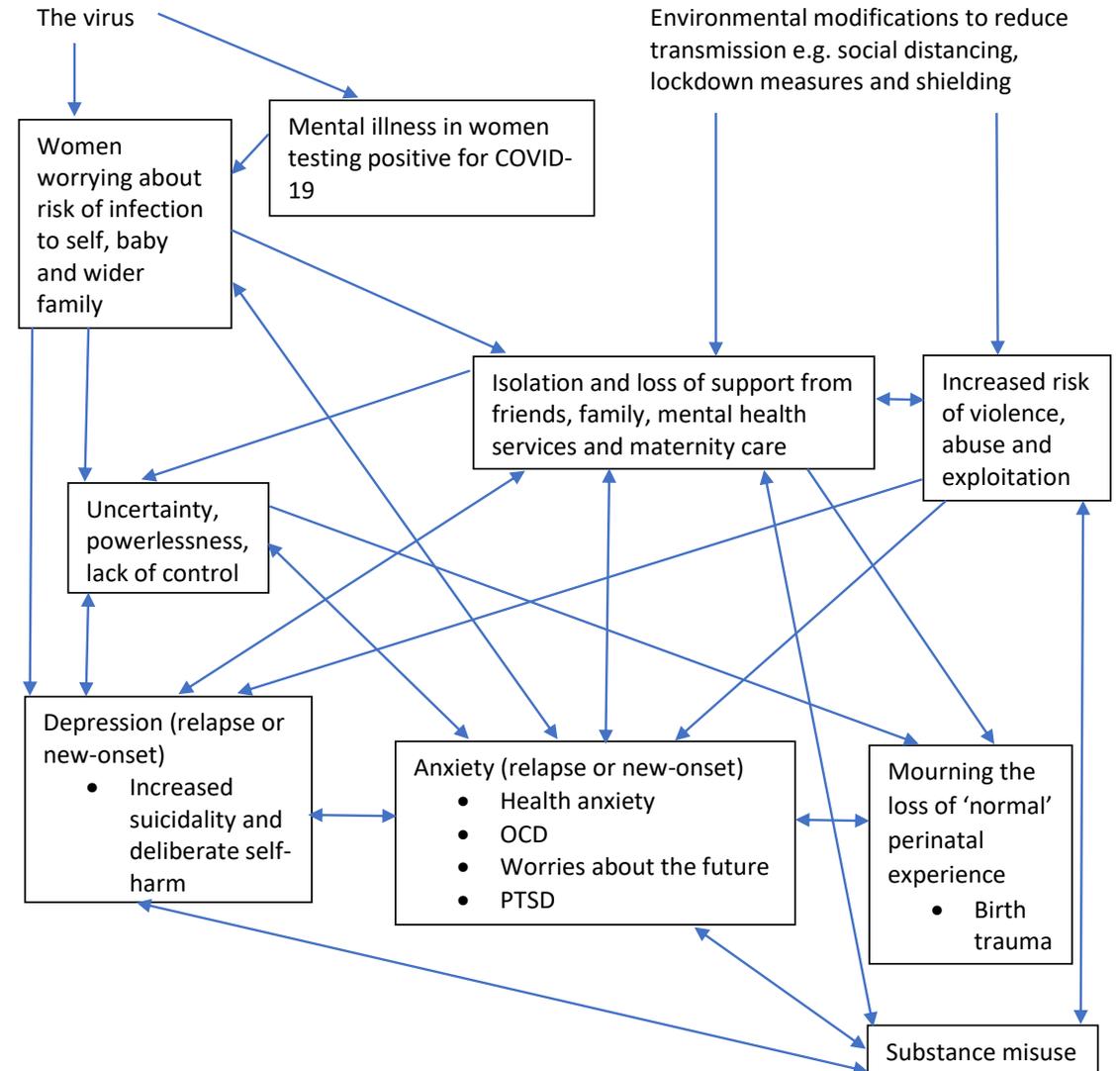
**Keywords** Perinatal · Mental health · COVID-19 · Coronavirus · Pandemic

**NIHR** | National Institute  
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Mental Health  
Policy Research Unit  
**mhpru**

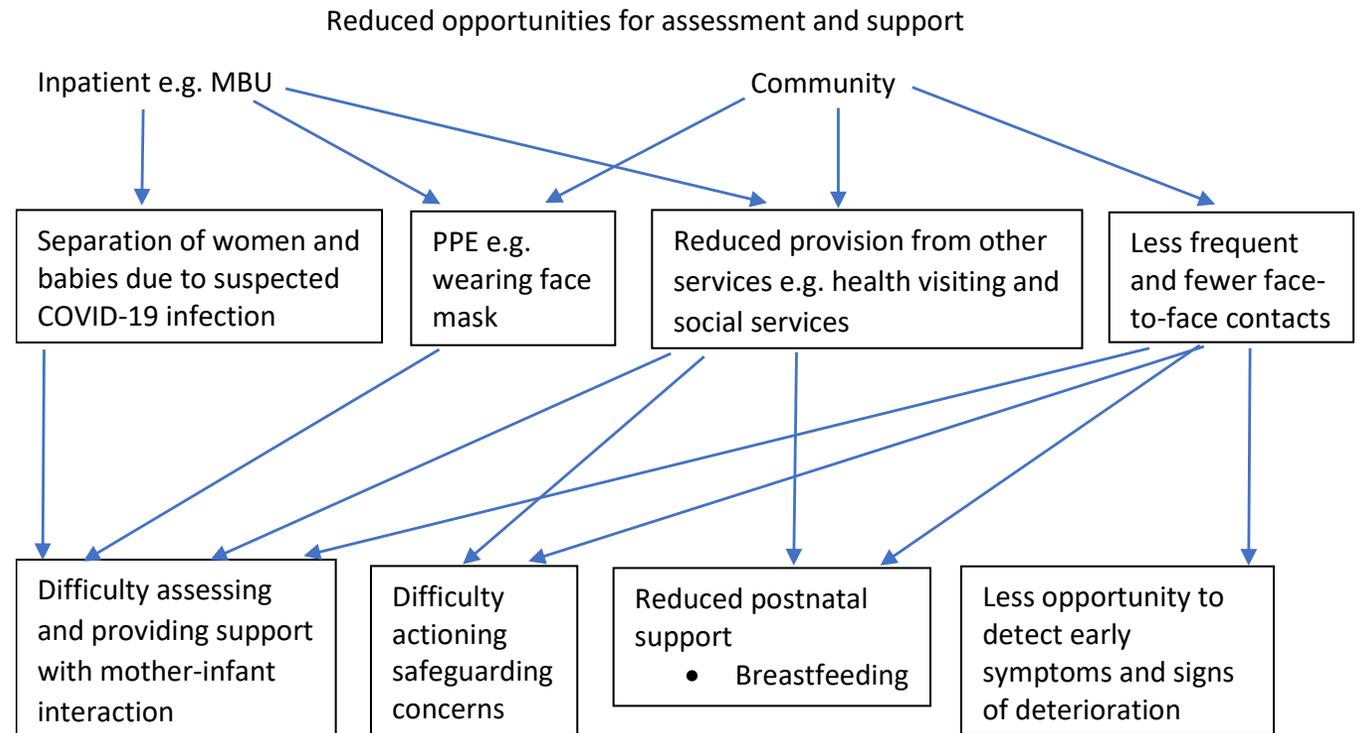
# Difficulties experienced by users of perinatal mental health services

- **Social isolation in perinatal women rated as very or extremely relevant by 79% of staff.**
- **‘Increased risk of abusive domestic relationships’: 53% of staff.**
- **‘Pregnant mothers extremely worried about the risk of catching COVID-19 and the risks to their babies’**
- **‘Vulnerable women and children at higher risk of DV’**
- **‘Anxiety and OCD symptoms related to fear of infection’**



# Changes made to perinatal mental health care

- 43% of staff rated as very or extremely relevant: ‘challenges assessing mother and infant relationships because of lack of direct access’.
- ‘Safeguarding procedures are more difficult than usual to mobilise’: 29%.
- ‘Vulnerable babies being cared for by unwell mothers ... less likely to be picked up by professionals’.
- ‘unable to [do] vital work to help mums bond with their babies’.
- Also positive adaptations.



# Learning from the last year

- Delivery of care needs to be tailored to the needs of each woman.
- Safeguarding and other risk assessment procedures must remain robust in spite of modifications made to service delivery during pandemics.
- **MBRRACE-UK March-May 2020: four suicides**
- ***'It was evident that changes to service provision as a direct consequence of the pandemic meant that women were not able to access appropriate mental health care. Receipt of the specialist care they needed may have prevented their deaths.'***
- <https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrrace-uk/reports>



# Lessons for clinical practice

---

**Strategies to optimise wellbeing (Matvienko-Sikar et al, Women and Birth, 2020):**

- **Physical distancing not social distancing.**
- **Simple cognitive behavioural strategies for perinatal distress e.g. recognising thoughts and feelings, keeping a diary.**
- **Access to clear information and communication about antenatal supports and COVID-19 risks.**
- **Structural interventions to address inequalities e.g. social care and income support.**
  
- **Advance planning.**
- **Increased contact with safeguarding leads.**
- **Increased liaison with other agencies e.g. maternity and primary care.**

# Further reading and guidance

<https://oxfordhealthbrc.nihr.ac.uk/our-work/oxppl/pregnancy-and-the-perinatal-period/>

<https://marcesociety.com/covid-19-perinatal-mental-health-resources/>

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[oxfordhealthbrc.nihr.ac.uk/our-work/oxppl/pregnancy-and-the-perinatal-period/](https://oxfordhealthbrc.nihr.ac.uk/our-work/oxppl/pregnancy-and-the-perinatal-period/)

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OXFORD PRECISION PSYCHIATRY LAB  
Pregnancy and the perinatal period

How to assess and manage mental health issues in pregnancy and the perinatal period in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

Last updated 05 October 2020

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### Good Practices in Perinatal Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Report from Task-Force RISEUP-PPD COVID-19

[Artículo de Opinión]

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Introduction  
Conclusion

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