



**The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Wales**

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**7 November 2017**

**Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport**

Welsh Government  
5th Floor  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
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**Dear Vaughan Gething, AM**

**Re: Children, Young People and Education Committee report into Perinatal Mental Health**

The Royal College of Psychiatrists in Wales welcomes the CYPE Committee report into perinatal mental health, published on 17 October. The Committee has taken a measured and detailed account of the current availability of service design and delivery, the views of those with lived experience and their partners, the experience of those providing support and treatment, and the impact of the third sector.

During the inquiry, the College provided detailed written and oral evidence in collaboration with our members. Our main concern has always been the closure of the Mother and Baby Unit - the difficulties around securing beds in England, the length of time that this takes, and the disruption that this causes to patients. Patients will recover quicker if they can be admitted promptly, closer to home, and with their babies. Witnesses to the inquiry agreed on this point and we are pleased that the Assembly has recommended that a unit is opened to serve everyone in Wales (Recommendation 3).

We are delighted that Welsh Government has developed a positive approach to supporting perinatal mental health services. Now all areas in Wales have dedicated community services which are able to reach a greater number of women and can also provide better training for junior doctors and consultants interested in perinatal mental health. The funding has either boosted existing services or created new ones so naturally variations in the quality of service delivery exist. We therefore support the reports recommendation to provide additional funding to Health Boards to better address variation so that service development and quality improvement can be achieved by expanding existing teams (Recommendation 9).

As clinicians, we often see many GPs reluctant to prescribe medication to pregnant or breastfeeding women. We see a general lack of awareness around the importance of medication and how the risks for and against medicating are taken into account. We

welcome recommendation "that the Welsh Government ensure Health Boards have in place established standards, advice and guidance on [psychiatric] medication during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and ensure that they are implemented" (Recommendation 22). We would like to invite you to meet with some of our members who are currently rolling out such training in GP clusters in South Wales.

The Community of Practice, administered through Public Health Wales, provides a useful forum for a range of professionals to share ideas to bring about service improvement. A managed clinical network could turn these ideas into common practice. We would suggest that services sign up to the [College's Quality Network for Perinatal Mental Health Services](#), which supports member services to 'evaluate their performance across a range of standards, reflect on their findings through a peer review process and share best practice and approaches to service improvement through an active network'. The Committee's first recommendation calls for a network to be established in Wales, led by clinicians, to drive improvements in quality, pathways, competencies, and training.

Training in perinatal mental health of all health professionals who regularly come into contact with pregnant women is key to ensure that the signs are detected and that women receive timely and appropriate treatment. We welcome the Committee's call to introduce training and agree that this should be part of the midwifery and health visiting training and education curriculum (Recommendation 16).

We wholly support all of the recommendations made by the Committee. Their report is vital to ensuring that the investments already made in perinatal mental health services are further strengthened. We would ask that you accept all of the recommendations outlined in the report and would like to thank the Children and Young People's Committee for conducting this vital piece of work.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Sue Smith  
Consultant Psychiatrist and Welsh Representative of the Perinatal Faculty of RCPsych

cc. Lynne Neagle, Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee  
Llinos Madeley, Clerk to the Children, Young People and Education Committee