



Perinatal Mental Wellbeing Report

May 2019

**Carried out in partnership with the Sutton Perinatal and Infant
Mental Health Early Help Network**



IMPLEMENTATION





Background

As part of Healthwatch Sutton's prioritisation process, the Board regularly analyse feedback collected about health and social care in the London Borough of Sutton. A process using a series of different considerations is then used to analyse the feedback and define priority areas for investigation. As part of this process, the Board also considers looking at issues that have been identified by those groups who are less likely to engage with us.

People starting families were identified in this category and it was agreed to develop a project entitled 'Getting the best start in life'.

As part of this work we agreed to look at perinatal mental health as this can have a significant impact on families. We expressed an interest in supporting the work of Healthwatch England in this area who allocated a small grant to be shared with Healthwatch Wandsworth and Healthwatch Croydon to investigate the experiences of local people.



Developing the project

We liaised with the Sutton Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Early Help Network to develop the questions and methodology needed to capture the information we need to improve support locally. This group has representation from a wide variety of groups and organisations including NHS and local authority providers and commissioners, and voluntary and community groups.

Some members of the group put themselves forward to be on an 'engagement' subgroup to develop and deliver this work.

It was agreed that a survey, available online and on paper, would be the most practical way to engage with people who are pregnant and who have had a baby in the last 2 years. It was also agreed that their partners should be invited to complete the same survey.

This group developed the survey and supported the collection of responses. We included a prize draw for £150 of vouchers to encourage participation.

Delivering the project

Is your partner pregnant or has she recently had a baby?



If your partner is pregnant or has had a baby in the last 2 years then Healthwatch Sutton would like to hear from you by completing our survey. We are asking questions about your experience of services and your views concerning mental wellbeing.

Everyone who takes part will have the chance to enter a draw for a £150 Amazon voucher.

Follow this link
<http://bit.ly/HWPerinatal>
Or scan the QR code to take part.

Feel free to share!

Find out more about us
www.healthwatchsutton.org.uk



Posters were created to promote the survey with a QR code that could be scanned on mobile phones/tablets to take participants directly to the survey.

The whole Network supported the promotion of the survey by displaying posters, advertising in newsletters and other publications, and the Maternity Voices Partnership (Epsom and St Helier Hospitals) (www.epsom-sthelier.nhs.uk/mvp) attended a clinic for parents-to-be to encourage people to take part.

In total 317 responses were collected by from the survey's launch in early March, to the closure date for the prize draw on 30 April 2019.

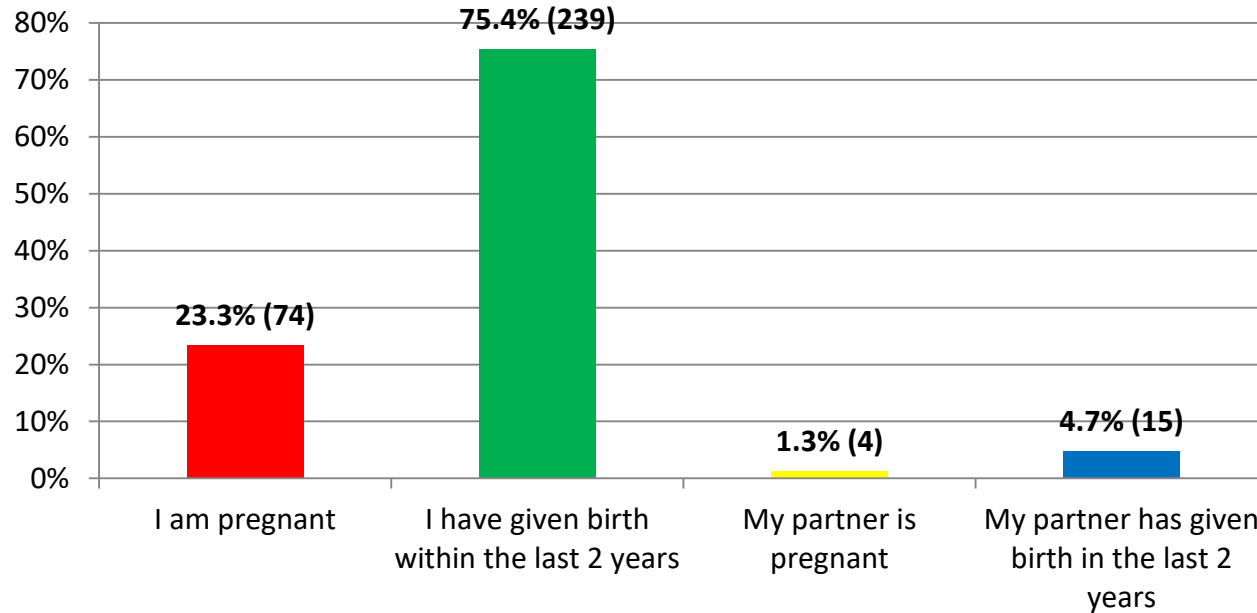


ANALYSIS



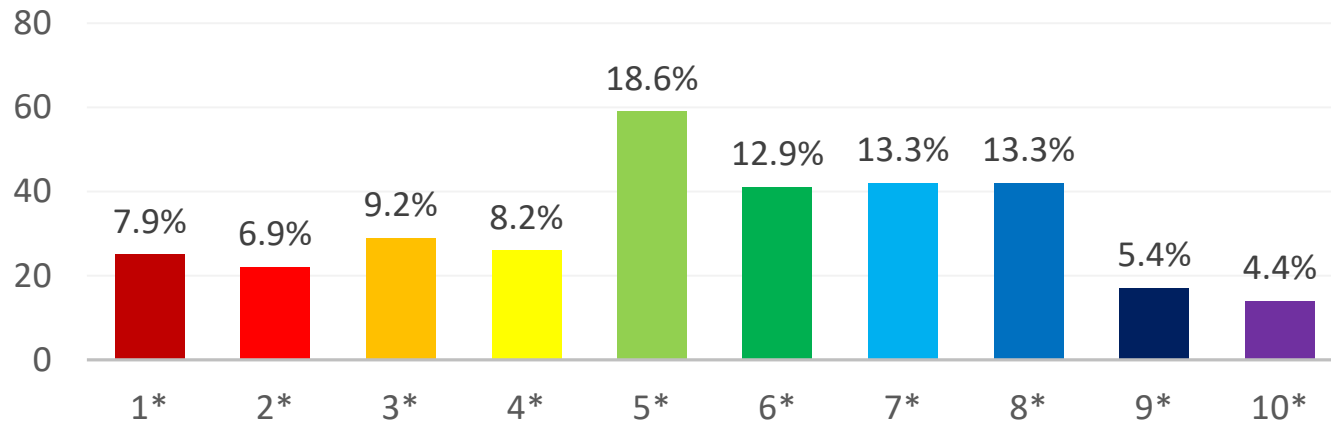
Who completed the survey

Which of the following statements apply to you:



Rate your knowledge

How would you rate your knowledge of the symptoms of perinatal mental health issues (1-No knowledge, 10-Very knowledgeable)?



These figures show a very equal split between those who rated their knowledge 1-5 (51%) and those who rated their knowledge 6-10 (49%)

Average knowledge rating by characteristic

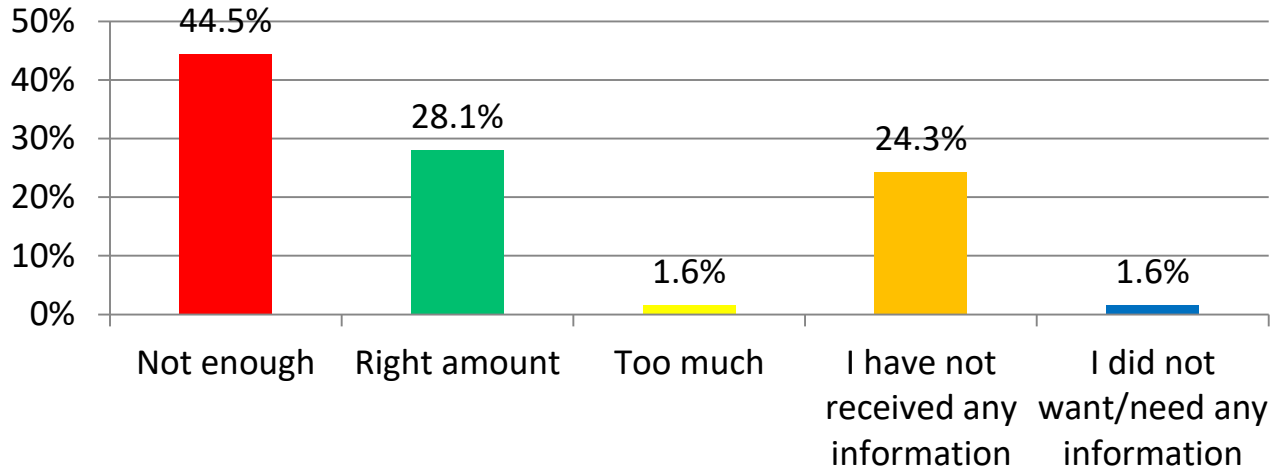
Characteristic	Average knowledge rating	Response numbers
All	5.4	315
Pregnant	4.5	74
Birth in last 2 years	5.7	236
Partner pregnant	5.3	4
Partner birth in the last 2 years	7.0	15
Male	5.9	17
Female	5.5	264

Figures in red have very low response numbers

Characteristic	Average knowledge rating	Response numbers
Under 18	10.0	1
18-24	5.2	18
25-29	7.0	46
30-34	5.5	123
35-39	5.7	75
40-44	5.0	16
45-49	7.0	1
50+	5.0	1
White British	5.6	222
All other ethnicities	5.3	58
Any other white background	5.9	34

Information

How much information have you been given about perinatal mental wellbeing (please select one answer)?



Combining those that hadn't received *any* information and those that hadn't received *enough* shows that 68.8% had an information deficit.

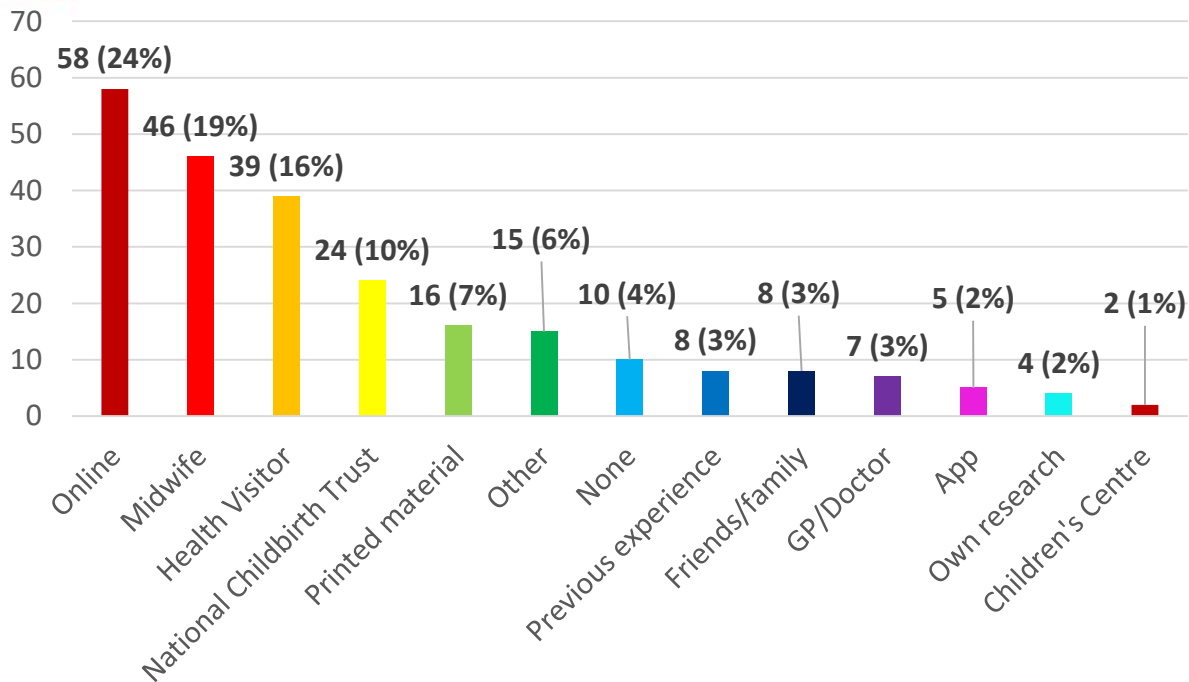
Information by group

Response	All	Pregnant	Birth in last 2 years	White British	All other ethnicities	Up to 29 years old	30-39 years old	40+ years old
Not enough	44%	45%	44%	43%	52%	46%	44%	50%
Right amount	28%	10%	32%	30%	28%	29%	29%	28%
Too much	2%	0%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	6%
I have not received any information	24%	43%	21%	23%	19%	22%	23%	17%
I did not want/need any information	2%	2%	1%	2%	0%	0%	2%	0%

People who are pregnant, non-'White British' people, those under 30 and over 39 all are above average for stating they did not receive enough information. People who are pregnant were above average for stating they did not receive enough information.

Main source of information

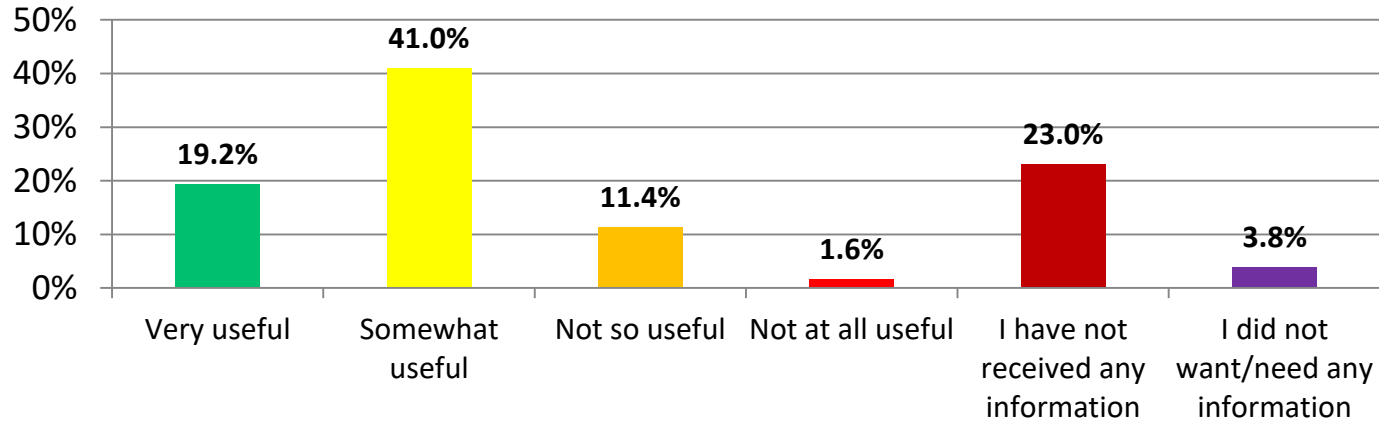
What was your main source of information (optional)?



This was a free-text question that has been put in to categories. Some respondents gave more than one main source so their first response has been used. Only those that specifically said 'none' have been counted under 'none' (blanks were not included).

Usefulness of information

How useful have you found the information you have received from this source (please select one answer)?

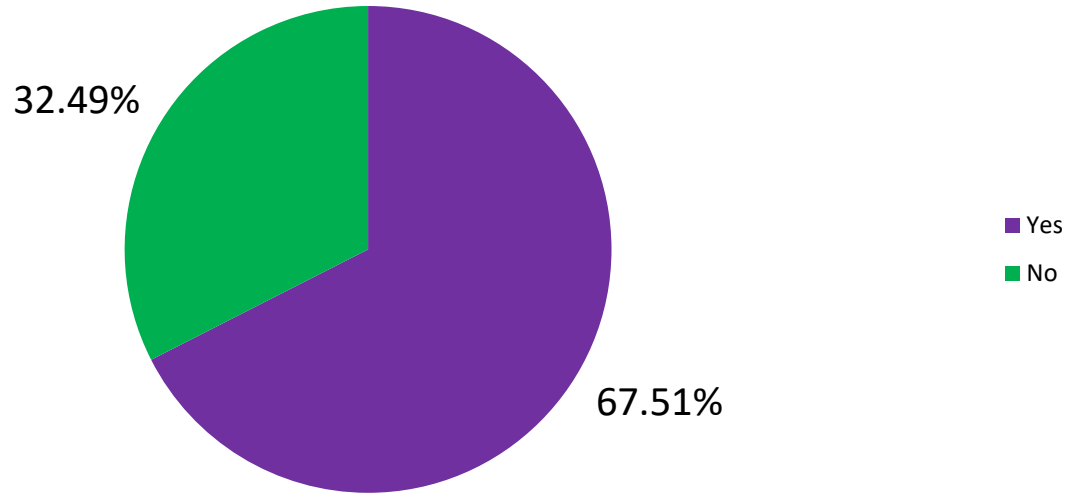


Of those that rated the usefulness of the information they received (removing those that had not received and did not need/want information), 82% rated the information 'Very' or 'Somewhat' useful.

Nearly a quarter (23%) stated they had not received any information

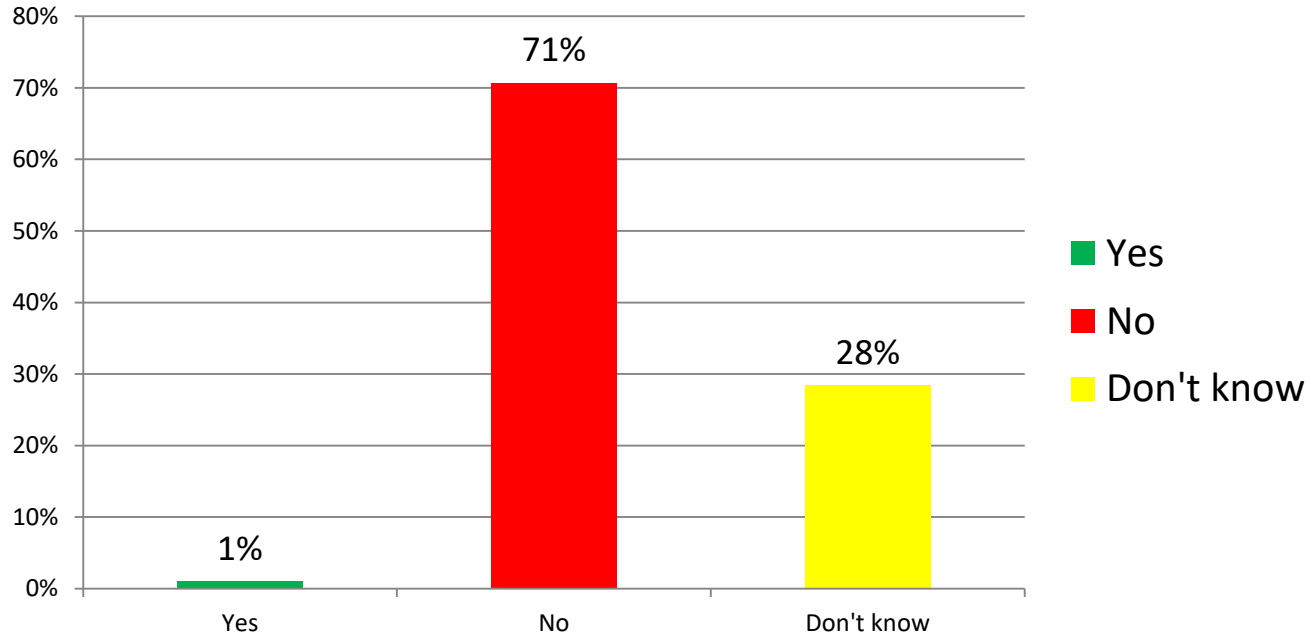
Partners

Did you know dads and partners can experience perinatal mental health issues as well?



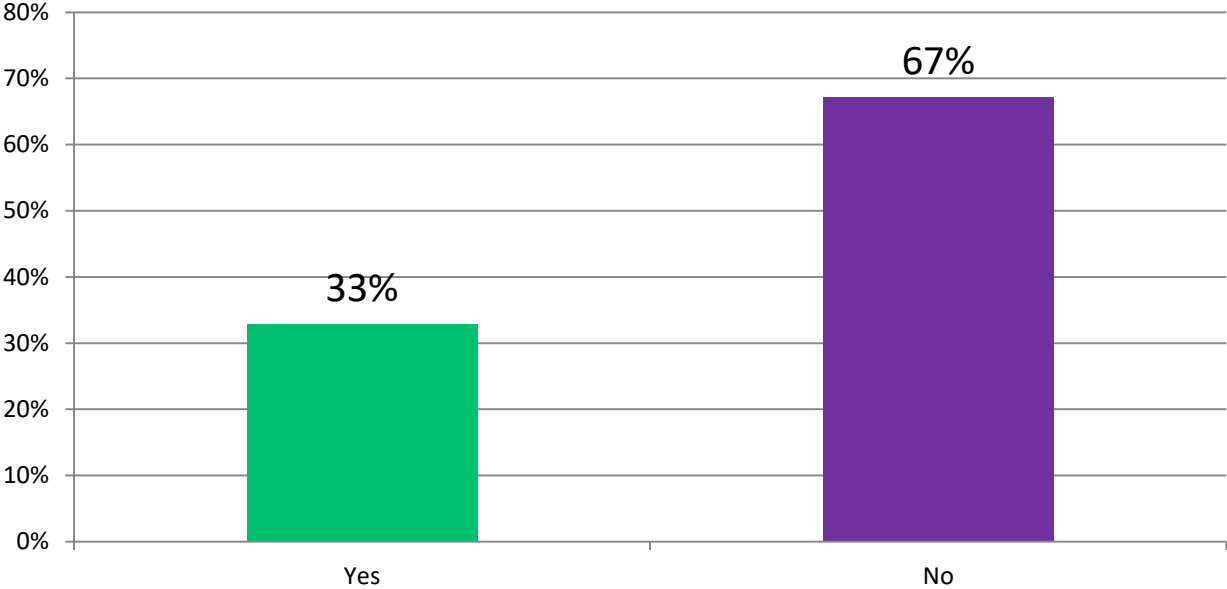
Help for partners

Do you think there is enough support for the perinatal mental health of dads or partners?



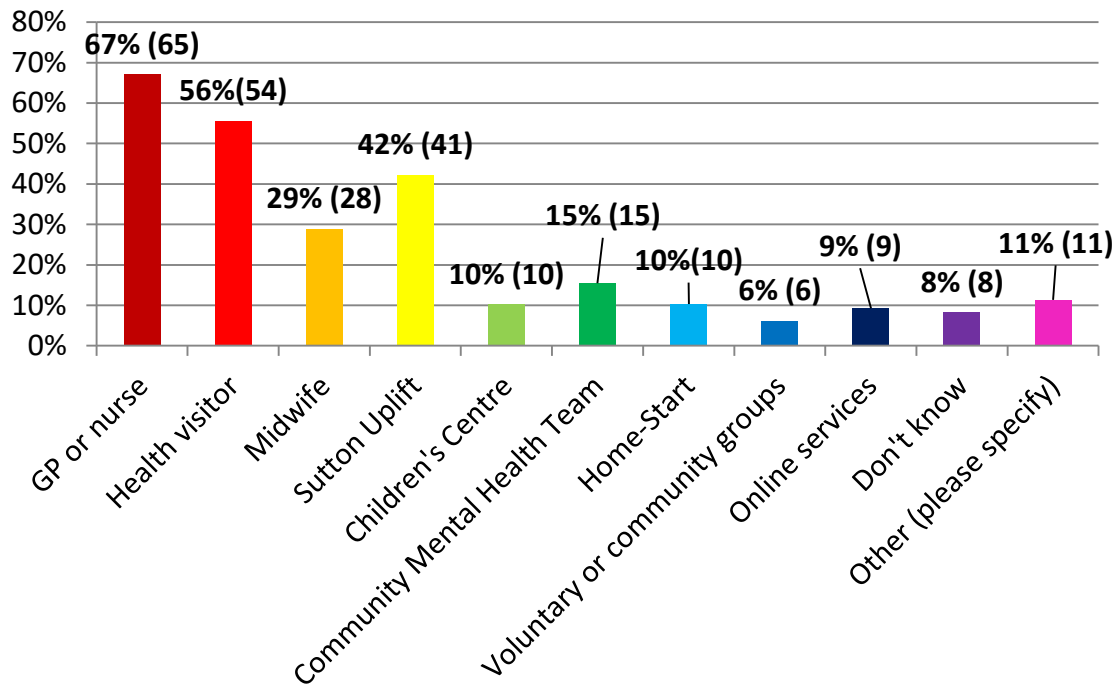
Accessing support

Have you, your friends or a member of your family accessed support for your/their perinatal mental health in the last 2 years?



Support Accessed

What support did you/they access (please select all that apply)?



Under 'other' people answered the following:

- Counsellor/CBT (x7)
- IAPT
- Think Action Merton
- Wellbeing SPACE group
- Mind Matters

Helpful Support

Dr to talk to
and have a cry

Health visitor baby massage group at Victor Seymour Children's centre, invite only, was helpful chance to have a reason to go out to somewhere with a focus that wasn't about mental health but contributes to positive thinking and baby bonding

Sutton Uplift - I was offered 6 sessions of telephone CBT after I gave birth to my daughter, I've had cbt before and it was useful to revisit some of the techniques in a time of need!

GP for medicine Health visitor for support, signposting to services and children's centre
Breastfeeding support worker also invaluable for support or I would have given up breastfeeding

All for various reasons. GP gave me access to other services, midwives explained the medical challenges I was facing, Health Visitors provided ongoing support, Children's Centres ran courses to improve wellbeing. Walking groups helped me to meet people and enjoy nature and all the remedial benefits of that. I had a huge support network.

Health Visitor, Sutton Uplift & Children's Centre They have been guiding me in the process to understand my feeling and how normal it is to feel the way I do. How to control anxiety and how I could know about it.

Midwife as she referred my partner to psychiatrist with special interest in perinatal mental health.

Health Visitor - was so lovely! and Space Group and HomeStart have both been lifesavers. Midwife also amazing

Sutton Uplift. I had CBT to help manage my anxiety and depression

Unhelpful Support

When I went for my checks after giving birth no one really checked how I was feeling

Midwives. One at hospital was amazing but the midwife at my post natal check was very unhelpful and said only that it was 'normal' to struggle. I didn't feel able to open up past that.

Very difficult to get hold of GP for appointment and very short discussion

I found there to be a disconnect between gps and health visitors. If I was suffering from post natal depression and struggling to care for my baby I think I would have fallen through the cracks, I had to be persistent to get advice from a health visitor and the gp did not have time/the right expertise to discuss my baby's sleep issues

GP - did not think I had problems and more or less told me to go away

Online research is not helpful because it is not tailored to you personally. It's very impersonal at a time when you need human connection the most

Midwives/GP don't have enough time to help unless you are in crisis

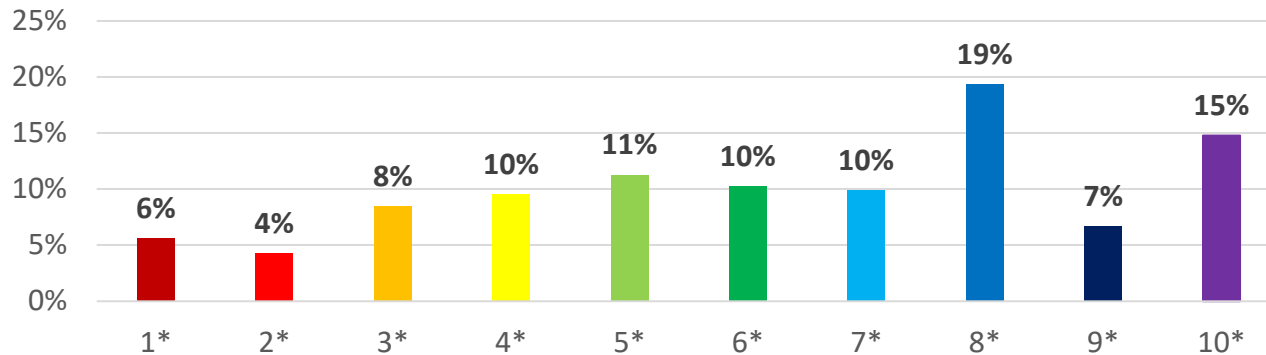
Uplift, only because had limited options for support that didn't meet my needs

All. I didn't feel the care was personal at all and made me not want to seek help anymore

Waiting times

How comfortable you feel accessing support

If you were worried about perinatal mental wellbeing, how comfortable would you feel accessing advice and support?
(1-Not at all comfortable - 10-Very comfortable)



- Not comfortable (1-3) - 18%
- In the middle (4-7) - 41%
- Comfortable (8-10) - 41%

Explanations for score (1-3) 'Not comfortable'

I wouldn't know where to go or who to talk to about it.

Feeling like you should be able to cope. Hard to bring yourself to tell a stranger how you feel. Also days can be different so it can be hard to judge.

I did seek and access support but I had to push all the time and advocate for myself. No one had the time to notice how much I was struggling, and when I did come forward it was repeatedly not followed up even though I was suicidal

Because you talk to one person who gives one bit of advice and then if you talk to someone else the advice is contradictory to what's been said previously so in the end it doesn't always help

I asked for help and didn't get any: it's hard to ask for help and I wouldn't do so again as I didn't get any help back.

I was initially scared that it would mean I was going to be referred to social services which is not the case

A mum doesn't really want to admit they are finding it difficult when they chose to have the baby in the first place. You kind of think you should be grateful and carry on as there are people that can't have children.

I would be worried about being judged that I am not coping

I would feel like a failure.

You worry about the effect being honest will have, there is still such a stigma about discussing it, and it takes an inner strength to ask for help when you are at your weakest

Explanations for score (4-7) 'In the middle'

Because I don't really like to ask anyone for help

Before I started getting help I was worried the children would be taken off me if anyone found out. However now I am confident I can go and seek help if needed

Whenever I saw health visitor the appointment was rushed and always in an open room with other women, so no confidentiality.

Had a positive experience with Uplift so expect similar

Hard to get targeted help, even charities online just tell you about symptoms and say go to GP. No counselling groups or places to meet others with similar issues

I am a mental health professional so would find it awkward asking for help myself

I don't really understand much about this - what is normal when you're pregnant and hormonal changes are taking effect?

I'd wonder if how I'm feeling is normal and I should put up with it and wait for it to go away with time

I feel like some support exists but it's not always forthcoming or judgment - free

I was worried if I told the truth about how I felt that they would take my daughter away

I personally don't think there should be a stigma but I can imagine my confidence would waver if the support felt judgey or accusatory to me in that fragile sensitive state.

I don't have the knowledge to talk about that subject

Explanations for score (8-10) 'Comfortable'

More people talk about it now, and it's not so secret

We need all the support we can get and it was strange that I only really understood there was a service after visiting my GP even though I had seen many midwives and health visitors

The support given after birth was great and I feel that my local health visitors are very approachable that I would be able to talk to them about getting help and advice.

If recognised myself or my partner suffered with PND, I would seek help to give my children the best upbringing.

It's high because I have accessed it already so it is not as daunting

If I was worried, I would want support to minimise any impact on my baby.

I would feel comfortable as I know there are many people willing to help. It's just having the courage to say something

I understand that mental issues are not a reason to feel ashamed, bad state can go away quicker if we get right help

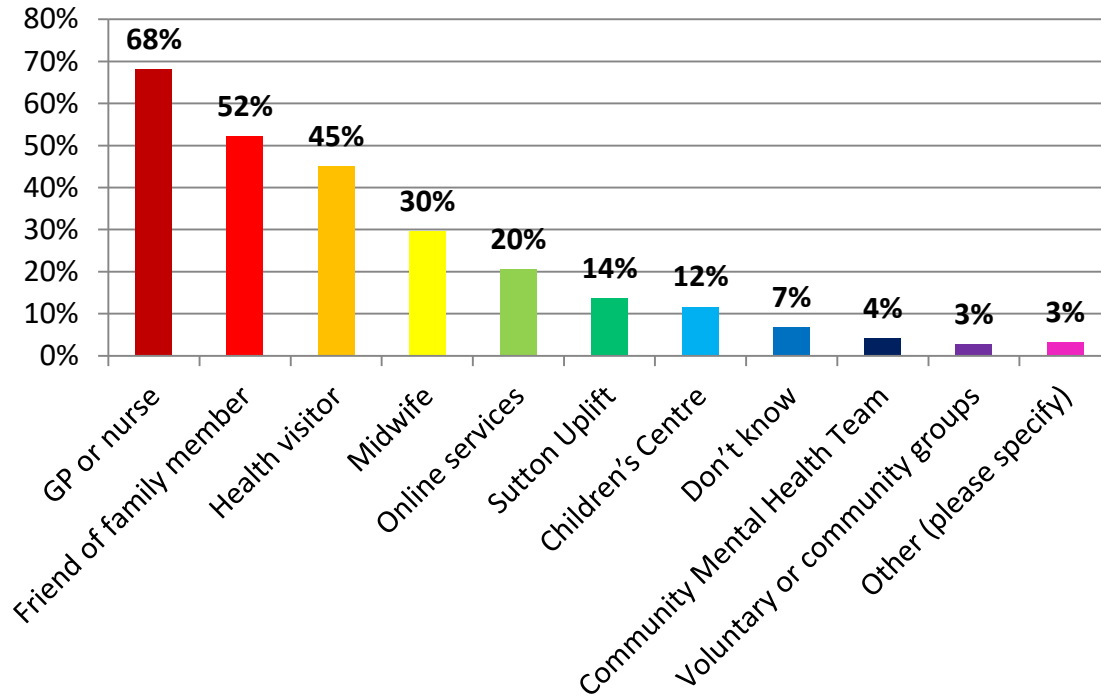
Because the staff have been so open and caring. Especially on home visits I'm very comfortable which makes it easier to talk openly.

I feel a lot more comfortable talking about mental health now after this year and half...the health visitor in particular made me feel totally safe, that it's totally normal and it's right to talk about it

I know what to look for within myself and how to obtain help from my GP and being referred if needed groups or Uplift etc. I know where there are so many community group meet ups to help get support in many ways

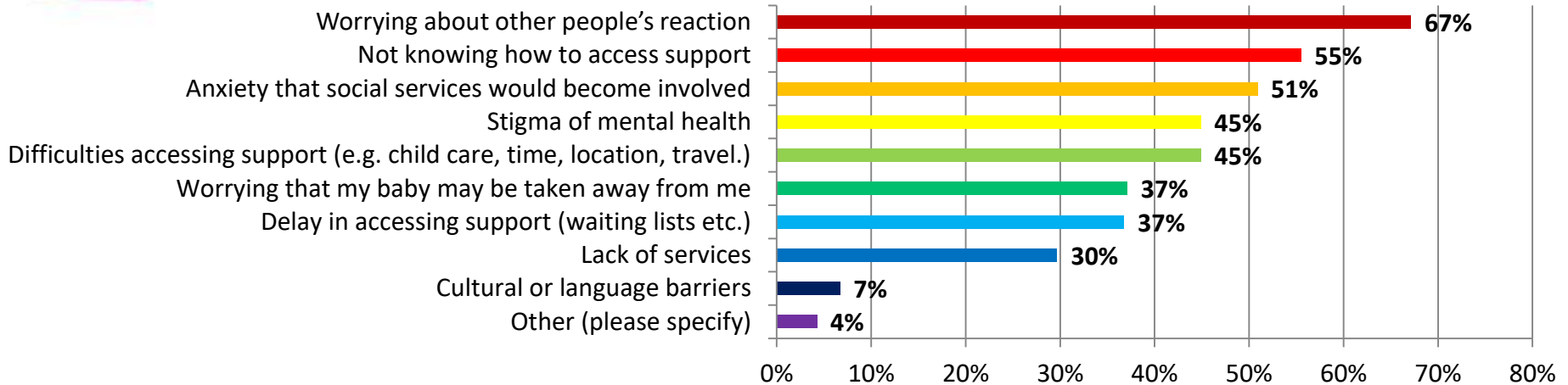
Help preferences

If you were worried about your perinatal mental wellbeing, where would you go for help (please select all that apply)?



Barriers to access

What do you think are the barriers to accessing help and/or support for perinatal mental health issues (please select all that apply)?

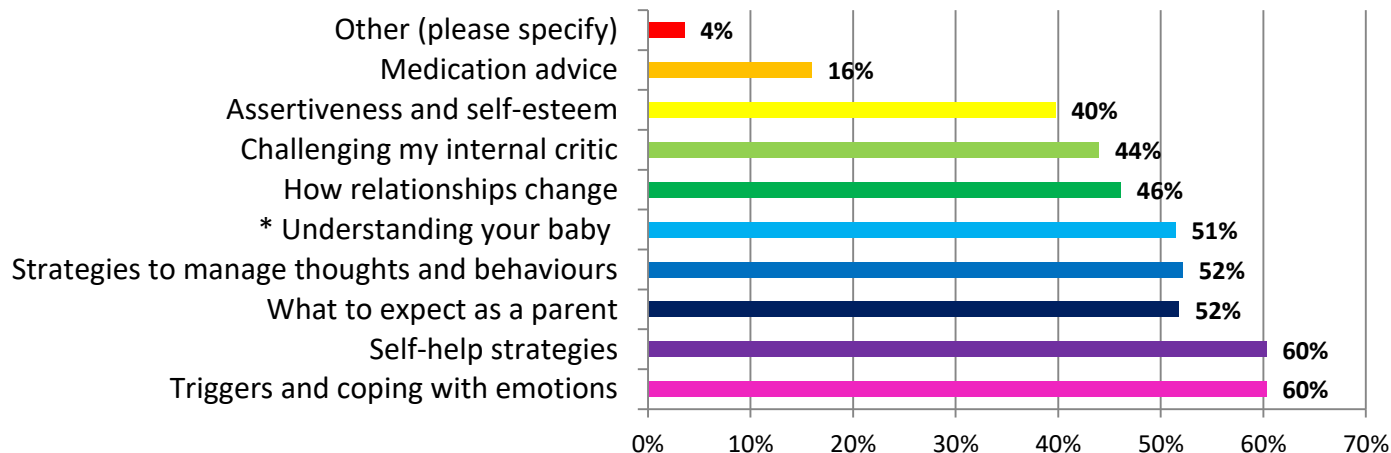


Respondents gave the following responses for 'other' barriers:

- Lack of opportunities for private, sensitive discussions
- Lack of trust with some health visitors, life insurance exclusions
- Midwife not signposting support
- Not being able to identify the symptoms
- Awareness that that's what they're suffering from
- Embarrassment of not coping
- Lack of belief that help exists/effective
- Lack of belief that I could be helped

Areas of learning preferences

Which of the following areas of learning would you find useful
(please select all that apply)?



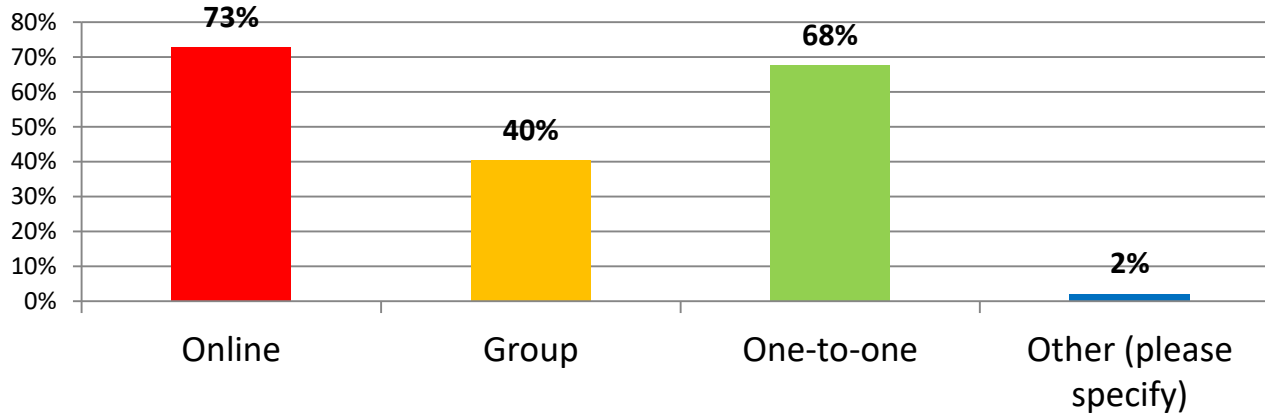
Other suggested areas of learning:

- Dealing with pregnancy after loss
- Making friends
- Mindfulness meditation
- Non patient identifiable medical record
- Dealing with returning to work and redundancy on maternity leave
- Sensible discussion about infant feeding decisions and their impact on mental health.
- Support for dads/non gestational parents. Support on intrusive thoughts.

* Understanding your baby – exploring you baby’s feelings, development, communication and behaviours

Accessing information

How would you like to access information concerning the areas specified in the previous question (please select all that apply)?



Other suggestions:

- A text support would a good one to one, even if it came after an initial meet
- Leaflet/hard copy
- Literature
- Phone calls, home visits
- Should have a session while having maternity appointments

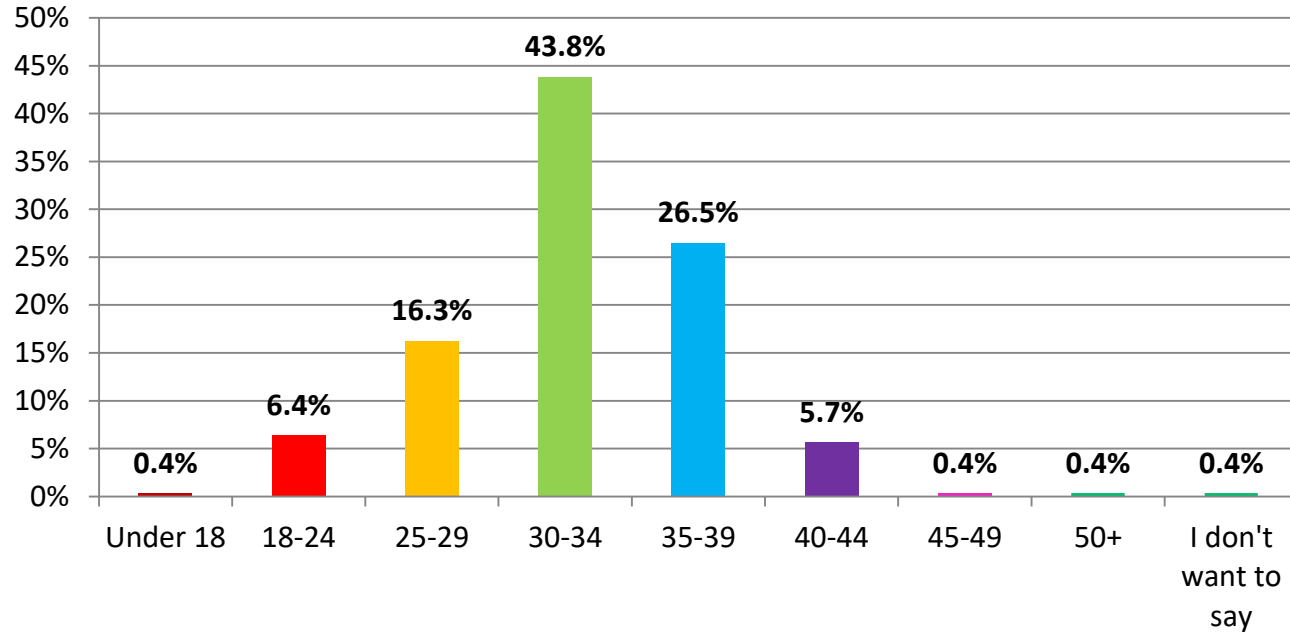


DEMOGRAPHICS



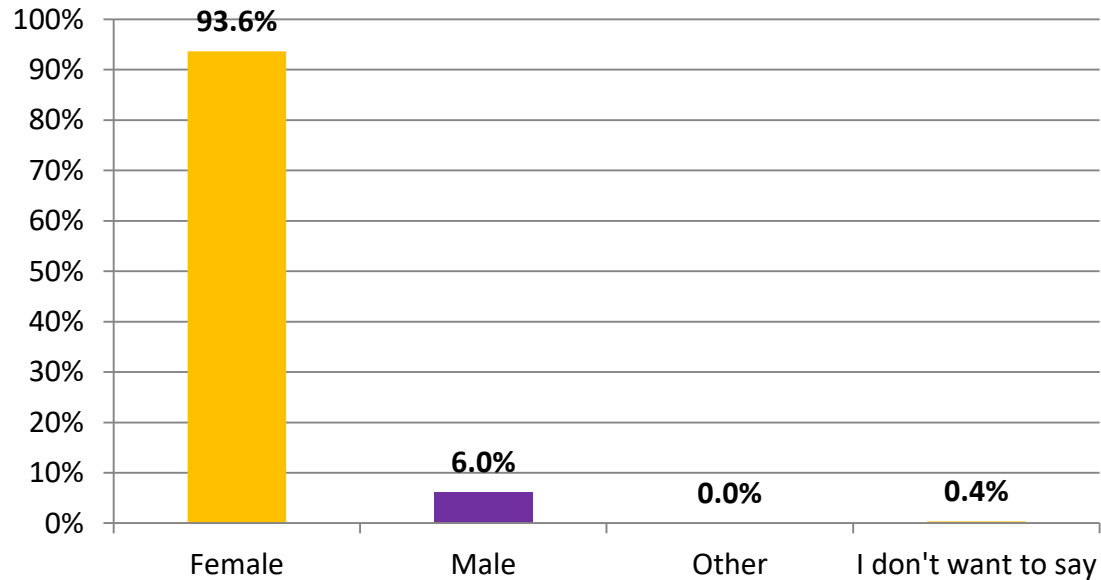
Age

How old are you?



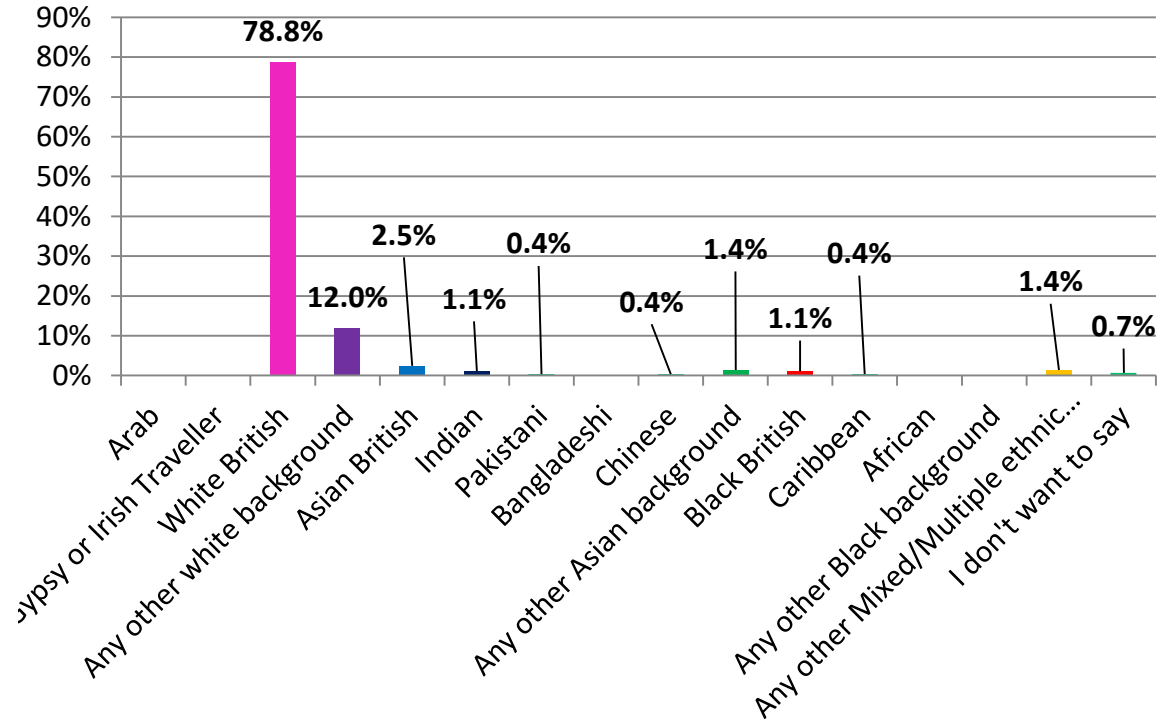
Gender

What is your gender?



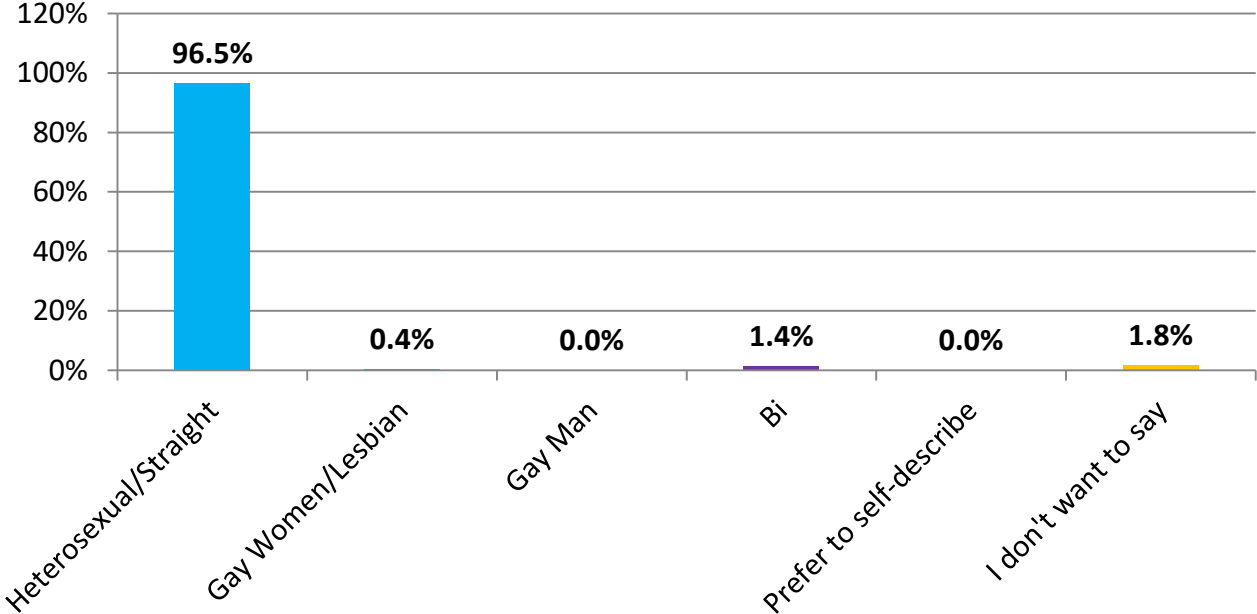
Ethnicity

What is your ethnic group?



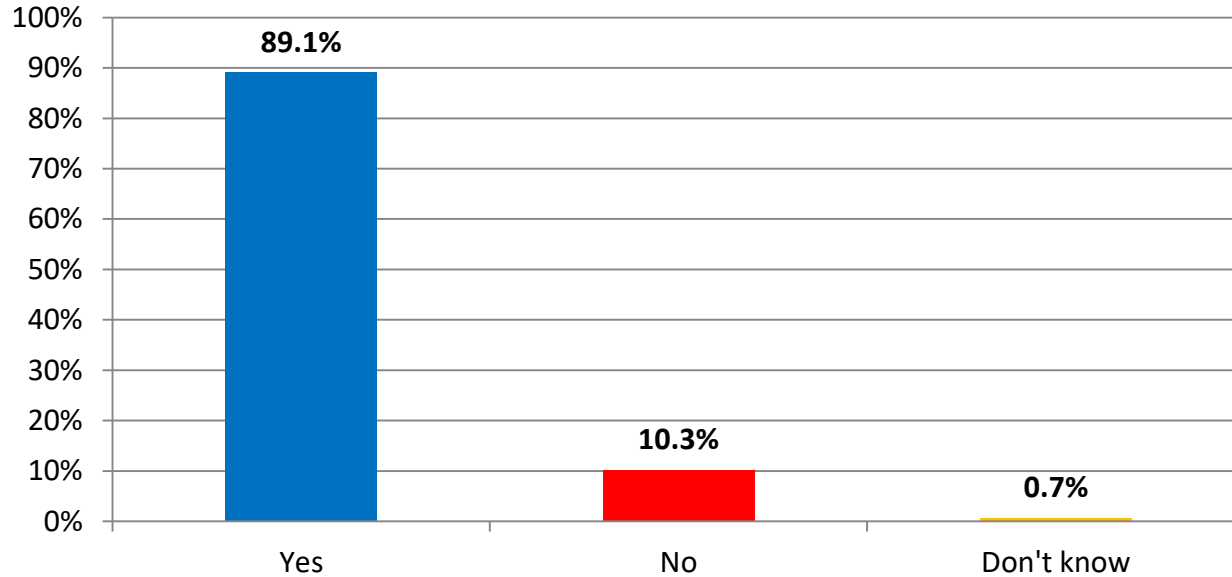
Sexual orientation

What is your sexual orientation?



In/out of Sutton (Borough)

Do you live in the London Borough of Sutton?





KEY FINDINGS

Key Findings (1)

- 68.8% of respondents had either received ‘not enough’ (44.5%) or ‘not received any’ (24.3%) information about perinatal mental health. 43% of pregnant people stated they had received ‘no information’ compared with 21% for those that had a baby in the last 2 years.
- Pregnant people rate their knowledge considerably lower (4.5 out of 10) than those who had a baby in the last 2 years (5.7 out of 10).
- The largest barriers to accessing help and/or support are:
 - Worrying about other people’s reaction - (67%)
 - Not knowing how to access support - (55%)
 - Anxiety that social service would become involved - (51%)
 - Stigma of mental health - (45%)
 - Difficulties accessing support (e.g. child care, time, location, travel) - (45%)
 - Worrying that my baby will be taken away from me - (37%)

Key Findings (2)

- 71% of respondents think there is ‘not enough’ support for partners (a further 28% stating ‘don’t know’. 32% did not know that partners can suffer from perinatal mental health issues as well.
- People’s main source of information is online (24% of all responses), followed by Midwife (19%) and Health Visitor (16%).
- Approximately 20% of people rated their comfort in accessing support at 3 or lower (scale 1-10).
- Respondents would like to access support online (73%), followed by one-to-one (68%).
- The survey collected a large volume of qualitative feedback that could be used by providers to look at their service or analysed by theme to develop actions.
- The respondents were not reflective of the demographics of pregnant people and people who have given birth for the London Borough of Sutton. Ethnic minorities were not well represented in the respondents.



RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendations

1. Investigate ways to fill the information gaps for the 69% of respondents who had either received insufficient or no information regarding perinatal mental health.
2. Develop a campaign to a) help remove the stigma around perinatal mental health b) reduce fears about social services intervention
3. As people would like to access information online, put in place clear, practical support information in one place online and promote significantly to ensure this is the first place that local people visit for information (to include signposting to other trusted organisations).
4. Look to further develop support for partners, using feedback from the existing partners group that has already been established.
5. Develop support/training for GPs and other relevant health professionals to improve their understanding of perinatal mental health, how to respond and where to access quality information.
6. Carry out additional outreach/research to find out the views of ethnic minorities who have not taken part in the survey. If necessary, develop specific tools to support these groups to access the information they need.



Thank You

We would like to say a big thank you to all of the 317 people who completed the survey. Without these responses we would not have the evidence to support improvements for people in the London Borough of Sutton and beyond.

We would also like to thank all of the Sutton Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Early Help Network, who made this project a success by creating an effective survey and supporting the collection of responses.

The recommendations were taken to a variety of groups with representation from people who were in the perinatal period and their partners to check they made sense and were practical. Changes were made as a result of their feedback.



For further information about Healthwatch Sutton

www.healthwatchsutton.org.uk

Tel: 020 8641 9540

