



We are incredibly grateful to **Anna McCarthy** who raised over £1600 for APNI. Anna, along with friends Claire, Grey and Matt completed the 'Three Peaks in Three Days' challenge in

July. This challenge was in memory of Anna's sister in law, Emma Cadywould, who sadly passed away 12 years ago. Anna's family and friends have been generously supporting APNI over the years and we cannot thank them enough for all the fundraising they have done.



A massive well done and thank you to **Kellie McCulloch** who completed the Tough Mudder Challenge held at Drunlanrig Castle this June and raised £314 for APNI. Kellie wrote on her JustGiving page: I've made the last minute decision to complete Tough Mudder on Saturday 15th June. Not only do I want to do this for my own personal achievement, I'd like to get sponsors for The Association for Post-Natal Illness, a charity very close to my heart. We very much need to raise awareness of PND and how this affects everyone. Below is the before and rather muddy after!



Book Review – 'Motherkind' by Zoe Blaskey, Sunday Times Bestseller



Staying with the very important topic of motherhood, we would like to recommend a new book by mum of two,

and qualified transformational coach, Zoe Blaskey. Zoe is on a mission to help mothers shift from guilt, exhaustion, and comparison to confidence and calm.

'Modern motherhood can be insane. We're expected to parent perfectly, bounce back, enjoy every moment, forge ahead at work and keep smiling through all the endless expectations – all whilst forgetting about ourselves'.

Motherkind is a perfect handbook on how to navigate motherhood without losing yourself and appreciating your own worth. It is an easy to read format that you can dip in and out of during a busy day and is packed with practical tips and quotes to hold on to. This book would be so helpful for any mums or mums to be or indeed anybody with an interest in supporting mums.

Motherkind by Zoe Blaskey, Harper Collins £14.07

The Linda Page Unsung Hero Award

Every year we invite mums to nominate their volunteer to receive some flowers to say thank you for their valuable support. This year we would like to pay tribute to Ashleigh Fisher. The mother she supported wrote:

"I first got introduced to APNI through my aunty who has been donating to APNI for years. After having a difficult childbirth I really wasn't myself, I felt lost and confused. As Ashleigh, my volunteer, had gone through similar experiences to me, she was like a fairy godmother. She was there for me in the middle of the night when I was up with the baby, although she likely wouldn't respond until the morning. Knowing I could message her at any time really helped with the feeling I wasn't alone."

We would like to thank all of our wonderful volunteers who help APNI provide support to mothers when they most need it. If you would like to nominate your volunteer for next year's award, please do contact us.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers a very Happy Christmas and New Year.



The APNI Newsletter

The Association for Postnatal Illness

1st Floor Offices, Fulham Park House, 1a Chesilton Road, London SW6 5AA

020 7386 0868

www.apni.org

info@apni.org

www.facebook.com/associationforpostnatalillness

@apni_pnd

apniuk

association for postnatal illness

Issue no. 82
October 2024

News from the Office

Welcome to our annual newsletter 2024. We are now well settled in our new home and enjoying our light and airy surroundings.



Jenny finished her active treatment for breast cancer last November and was delighted to return to the office in January and reunite with her colleagues, Siobhan, Alice and Margie.

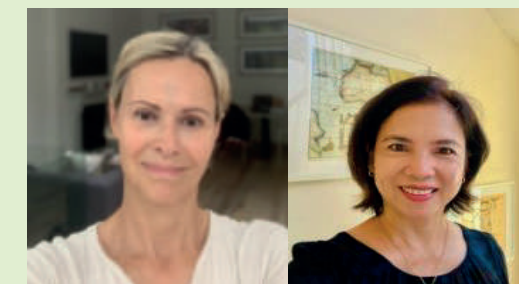
In August, Jenny met with local midwife and newborn parenting coach Jacqui Nancey. Many new mums (dads included) had been asking community midwives to organise weekly Postnatal Cafes where postnatal parents can go and feel relaxed for the day after a pretty exhausting night with their newborn baby. Or when feeling lonely and needing some adult company.

Hearing this, Jacqui, a Mental Health and Baby Sleep research midwife, took up the challenge with her local maternity services. However she was informed

that her local authority family services had zero funding for her newborn family support initiative.

Undeterred, Jacqui then pitched the same idea of running weekly postnatal groups to local cafes and now the groups are up and running. APNI provided our 'Baby blues and postnatal depression' leaflets to display and hopes that any parents struggling with their postnatal mental health will get in touch.

During this year's annual Maternal Mental Health Awareness week in May, Siobhan and Alice held a Facebook live with committee member and postnatal counsellor, Liz Wise. The theme was 'rediscovering you' and how you can, and will, feel much stronger when you come out the other side. Siobhan also held an Instagram live chat with midwife Georgia, who gave birth to her own baby boy in September. Georgia gave some very helpful tips for mums and mums to be.



JENNY

ALICE



MARGIE

SIOBHAN

Update on APNI’s Campaign

Last November the Association wrote to the Minister of Health to ask that the government would fund a second, extended GP appointment for all women who have recently given birth.

There is currently one funded post-natal GP appointment which leaves no time for new mothers to discuss any physical or psychological problems that they may have. as it is usually used to do the gynaecological six week check.

Psychiatric services around the country are completely overwhelmed, so most women who are suffering from anxiety or depression, after having a baby, can only hope to get help from their GP.

We have asked the Maternal Mental Health Alliance to back this Campaign. Dr Vicky Farrow, who is the GP on our Committee, wrote to the Chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners this spring, to ask that organisation to support our Campaign.

We would urge our members and supporters to promote this Campaign whenever they see the opportunity to do this.

Why don’t we look after new mothers?

Selections from an article by Lucy Jones published in The Guardian on Wednesday 24th August 2024

It feels shameful to admit that new motherhood was the loneliest time of my life.

This took me by surprise. While I had a supportive partner and co-parent, family and friends, access to a library and baby groups, and a tendency towards introversion, the isolated arrangement of modern motherhood was a shock.

One study found that more than a third of new mothers in the UK spend eight hours a day alone with their babies, and this was often the case for me.

My baby was spectacular as they all are, but not talking to adults for hours at a time, most days of the week, was a peculiar experience. It gnawed at me. I lost social skills and confidence. I fell silent and, for a while, withdrew. I struggled to ask for, or accept, help. I didn’t know how to talk about the chaos of childbirth, the effect on my body and mind- which I’m sure contributed to periods of depression and anxiety. I thought there was something wrong with

me. Wasn’t this supposed to be the happiest time in my life?

We have known about the dangers of loneliness for health for a while. Its impact is compared to the effect of smoking 15 cigarettes a day. But until recently, little was known about perinatal loneliness. In fact what I was feeling was not unusual at all.

Some research suggests that 80-90% of new mothers in the UK feel lonely. One study found that 43% of mothers under the age of 30 in the UK felt lonely all the time.

Loneliness is more prevalent in new parenthood than in the general population, and it is more common among certain at-risk groups, such as young parents, immigrant and refugee mothers, mothers without supportive partners, mothers looking after a child with significant health problems, and transgender and non-binary parents.

Loneliness, unsurprisingly, can lead to mental illness. In 2023, a review of evidence carried out at University College London found it was a key factor for perinatal depression. The study’s lead author Dr Katherine Adlington, said “We found that loneliness was central to the experiences of expectant and new mothers with depression.”

Chronic loneliness - feeling lonely often or always- is now experienced by around a third of new parents. For a species that relies on social contact for health, wellbeing, survival and learning, this is not ideal. So why are mothers in our society so lonely?

In most cultures across the world, including in China, Japan, India and South America, new mothers follow similar practices or rituals after giving birth that acknowledge the emotional heft that becoming a mother brings, as well as what a body goes through in pregnancy and childbirth. These often involve some combination of nutrient-rich meals, massages, drinks and herbal baths prepared by close female relatives, women in the community or hired postnatal assistants who will care for the mother and baby for about 40 days. The mother is expected to rest and be looked after, while feeding and bonding with her baby.

Childcare support, seems to have been substantial in our evolutionary past. Modern mothers are faced with the challenge of child rearing outside the co-operative childcare systems that have been so key to our species evolution. Researchers have found that the causes of perinatal loneliness include a lack of recognition of the difficulties of being a mother, the burden of childcare, an absence of community and

social networks, mismatch between expectations and reality, and the stigma attached to breastfeeding difficulties.

A sense of failure among new parents came up time-after-time in a 2024 study by Dr Ruth Naughton-Doe, a research fellow at the University of York specialising in loneliness. “But they were not failures,” she says. “They had been failed. Failed by a society that does not value parenting. Failed by under resourced services.”

SureStart children’s centres have had budgets slashed by 60% since 2010, with many closing down. Austerity has also eroded social support, since 2015 in England, health visitor numbers have reduced by 37%.

Unsurprisingly “intensive mothering” – now studied and practised across the industrial world – is associated with poor maternal mental health, stress and burnout. John Bowlby, the architect of attachment theory and its role in child development, emphasised that this was “no job for a single person” and that a caregiver needed “a great deal of assistance.”

Yet mothers today spend twice as much time looking after their children every day as those in the 1950’s while working more hours. Thankfully recently some creative health interventions for new mothers have emerged. These include music, singing, yoga, art and nature- based groups.

Single parents should be able to nominate someone else to take leave when they go into labour (if they have other children and no one to look after them, the children go into temporary care by social services). This may be very traumatic for any older children.

The health, wellbeing and vulnerabilities of those who experience pregnancy, birth and new parenthood are at risk in a culture that disavows so much of this developmental stage.

Matrescence: On the Metamorphosis of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Motherhood.

By Lucy Jones, Penguin £9.99.

Fundraisers

We are very grateful to all our fundraisers who have helped raise much needed funds for APNI. If you or anyone you know would like to take part in an event

to raise money for us, please contact the office and we can provide you with an APNI shirt.

Huge thanks to **Lydia Worthington** for raising £382 by completing the Tatton 5k run on 11th May 2024.



Lydia said: ‘It was a pleasure to do this 5K and raise money for APNI. After suffering with postnatal depression I know how hard it is and how much work it takes to get better again and I really admire the work that APNI does to help new mums’.

What a great achievement and fundraising effort from **Laura Best!** 100 Burpees & 1 mile weighted vest (7kgs) run – EVERY hour on the hour for 10 hours.

Laura raised over £1090 on the 12th December 2023, accompanied throughout every step by her husband Jamie. Laura and Jamie are both active members of the British Army and a number of their fellow soldiers joined the challenge during the day. We are incredibly grateful to Laura, Jamie and to everyone who participated.



We would also like to say many thanks to **Pavan Bhardwaj** for raising over £868 for APNI by participating at the Ultra White Collar Charity Boxing match held in Rochester on the 7th July 2024.

Pavan wrote on his JustGiving page: I’d like to help generate funding for women who have suffered with post-natal illness. I have witnessed the suffering it causes first hand and this is a charity that is close to my heart.

