



# The APNI Newsletter

## The Association for Postnatal Illness

1<sup>st</sup> Floor Offices, Fulham Park House, 1a Chesilton Road, London SW6 5AA



020 7386 0868



@apni\_pnd



[www.apni.org](http://www.apni.org)



apniuk



[info@apni.org](mailto:info@apni.org)



[www.linkedin.com/company/association-for-post-natal-illness](https://www.linkedin.com/company/association-for-post-natal-illness)



[www.facebook.com/associationforpostnatalillness](https://www.facebook.com/associationforpostnatalillness)

Issue no. 83  
October 2025

### News from the Office

Welcome to our annual newsletter 2025. We hope that you have been able to enjoy the warmest summer on record and boosted your vitamin D levels ahead of the darker months ahead! We are pleased to share what's been happening at APNI and more broadly about the people and projects making a difference in our community.

The office continues to be staffed by Siobhan Merrifield, Jenny Weeks, Alice Hutton, and Margie Smith.



In May 2025, Yasaman Knight joined the team as General Manager, and is currently familiarising herself with the workings of the Charity, with a view to taking on some of Clare's responsibilities.

Yas wrote:

*"I am delighted to be appointed as the General Manager of APNI. During my previous job in local government, I worked closely with many third-sector organisations, which gave me valuable insights and strengthened my belief in the importance of community-based support, something that lies at the heart of APNI."*

*I am excited to work with our wonderful team as we take the next steps in the charity's journey, making a meaningful difference in the lives of the people we help, with your continued support."*

In February Margie, Jenny and Alice attended the NCEL Perinatal Provider Collaborative Launch. This event shared the aims and ambitions of the Collaborative, and we heard directly from women and birthing people around their experiences of inpatient and community perinatal services. We hosted a stand where we could share some of our literature and have the opportunity to network among the perinatal community of North Central and East London.

In June, Yas attended the Maternal Mental Health Alliance members meeting online. This was a great introduction to all things perinatal and she enjoyed getting to know some of the other members.

Also in June, Jenny attended a reception at the House of Commons, to celebrate the launch of Reading Well for families. APNI were delighted to be part of the health consultation process.



Parenting in the early years can be a rollercoaster. Whether you're an expectant parent, a new mum or dad, or caring for little ones.

From 10 June 2025, libraries across England and Wales are offering a brand new Reading Well for families booklist. These free, expert-recommended reads cover topics like mental health, wellbeing and coping with loss. You'll find practical advice, personal stories, illustrated books, and poetry, all chosen to support you through this time. Many titles are also available as e-books or audiobooks. You can borrow from your library or explore the booklist online:

[www.readingagency.org.uk/reading-well/families](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/reading-well/families)

The event opened with a keynote speech from Maya Ellis MP, Chair All-Party Parliamentary Group on Babies (Pregnancy to Age 2), followed by a panel of speakers detailing the development of Reading Well for families and the role of books and reading in supporting health and wellbeing.

### **APNI Committee Update**

We are delighted to welcome **Rachel Fenwick** who joined the APNI Board of Trustees in June 2025.



Rachel is a qualified solicitor with extensive experience in the financial services and investment management sector, where she has held senior leadership roles including COO and CFO. Her connection to APNI is deeply personal: following the birth of her first daughter, Rachel experienced severe postnatal depression and anxiety and found vital support through our helpline. Having since volunteered with APNI for several years, providing peer support to other mothers, she now brings both her professional expertise and lived experience to the trustee board. Rachel is passionate about ensuring that other women receive the timely, compassionate support that was so crucial in her own recovery.

Rachel says: *"Without APNI's help, I don't know where I would be. Becoming a trustee is my way of giving back, and of helping ensure that every mother has access to the same understanding and support that made such a difference to me."*

### **Liz Wise**

Sadly, after more than 20 years of dedicated service, Liz Wise resigned from her role as Trustee in January 2025. The Chairman and Committee wish to express their heartfelt thanks to Liz for her long-standing and highly valued contributions.

### **Diane Nehme**



We are very saddened to report the passing of Diane Nehme, who came to work for the Association in 1984. Diane became a Trustee and Secretary of APNI in 1998. When the office moved from Jerdan Place to Dawes Road in 2000 Diane opted to work from home.

Diane worked very hard counselling long-term clients on the phone and always attended Committee meetings unless prevented by health reasons.

Diane continued working up until her death in November 2024. She was very popular with the many women whom she helped and she will be greatly missed.

### **Antenatal Depression and Anxiety**

#### **Vivette Glover. Visiting Professor of Perinatal Psychobiology, Imperial College London**

Postnatal depression is the best known aspect of perinatal mental illness. It is not so generally known that antenatal depression is just as common and often continues into the postnatal period. Antenatal anxiety is equally common and a predictor of postnatal depression (Heron et al 2004). Both antenatal and postnatal depression affect about 15% of women in the UK, although rates differ a bit depending on how the depression is measured.

But it is really imperative to realise that many women suffer from depression and anxiety during pregnancy too and that it is important that they receive appropriate help. We need to relieve immediate suffering, and we need to prevent the later development of postnatal depression. We also need to intervene for the sake of the future child.

There are many appropriate methods for effective intervention. If the depression is quite severe, most antidepressants can be used and are safe. Otherwise talking therapies such as CBT can work. There are other alternative methods that can be helpful as well for reducing stress, anxiety and depression, such as yoga or even listening to, or taking part, in making music. Seeing the GP is usually the best first place to seek help.

What is important is that if you, or someone you know, is feeling depressed or anxious during pregnancy, effective help is sought.

Heron J, O'Connor TG, Evans J, Golding J, Glover V; ALSPAC Study Team. (2004) The course of anxiety and depression through pregnancy and the postpartum in a community sample. *J Affect Disord.*;80(1):65-73.

## **Maternal Mental Health Awareness**



In May the Perinatal Mental Health Partnership ran their annual Maternal Mental Health Week - shining the spotlight on mental health problems before, during and after pregnancy. This year the theme was 'your voice, your strength.'

The week aimed to:

- Raise public and professional awareness of maternal mental health issues
- Advocate for women and families impacted by these challenges
- Break the stigma surrounding perinatal mental illness
- Promote access to information, care, and support for recovery

During the week the Maternal Mental Health Alliance (MMHA) shared the Perinatal Mental Health Symptom Checker, a new resource designed to help identify the signs and symptoms of both common and lesser-known perinatal mental health conditions.

In September, The Motherhood Group led the fifth annual Black Maternal Mental Health Week. Black mothers face higher risks and barriers to care. They are more than twice as likely to be hospitalised with perinatal mental illness than white mothers, making up 12% of admissions despite only 5% of births (The Guardian). One in five did not seek help for depression during or after pregnancy (Mental Health Foundation).

We were delighted to support the week by providing some of our literature and attending the interesting online events.

## **Learn to Argue with your Inner Critic**

**Clare Delpech**

Some people are possibly unaware of their inner critic. This is the voice (not really a voice but a strong

thought) that you have done something wrong, that you have done a job badly, that you are too fat, too lazy, too ugly etc.

Sometimes when we have a baby the inner critic sees an opportunity to take charge and we are subject to an assault of negativity of the type 'you are doing this all wrong' in relation to baby care, or 'you should be feeding, better, more, longer' in relation to feeding baby, and 'why haven't you done this or that task' relating to undone housework and other household jobs.

For some of us this barrage of internal criticism can come to dominate our thought processes so that we feel increasingly less able to cope and constantly worthless and unworthy.

These feelings can easily slide into a full depression and, as we are often alone following the birth, there is nobody around to tell us that our negative thoughts are incorrect and unfounded.

In countries where new mothers are taken care of by family members for the first few weeks, there should be plenty of positive affirmation to counter negative thoughts. This is not always the case, but support for new mums should be as much for their mental as for their physical health and wellbeing.

For many women who have a new baby it can be very helpful to recognise the 'internal critic' and to question whether it is correct or not. So often those negative thoughts are really unfounded and they are rarely balanced by positive affirmations.

I remember talking to an experienced midwife about my anxieties concerning caring for my baby. She said that she always suggested that new mums asked themselves one question. Is baby warm, clean and fed? She said if the answer to this question is 'yes' then you are a good mum doing a good job. She said that too many women create an impossible standard to measure themselves against. Stick to the basics. It is hard enough keeping any young baby warm, clean and fed so we should congratulate ourselves if we can achieve this. Too often we are berating ourselves because we have not been out to buy the groceries for supper or we can see dust on a table.

Looking after a new baby is extremely demanding. If we stop criticising ourselves and congratulate ourselves on small daily achievements then we can hope to stay more mentally healthy during the early months of our baby's life.



## Raising Awareness

If anybody has some spare time, it would be a great help to us if you could circulate some of our leaflets and small posters to local clinics and baby groups. Please contact the office if you can help with this.

We are also becoming more active on social media in a bid to raise our profile. We would really appreciate it if you could follow us on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

## The Dangers of Online Scrolling for New Mums

**Margie Smith & Alice Hutton**



Social media plays a dominant and complex role in modern motherhood, many of whom feel connected and others very isolated by it. When the baby finally sleeps or the rare and precious moments of 'me time' finally arise, many mums reach for their phones and take a quick scroll through their news feed which can feel like a lifeline to the outside world.

But what starts as a moment of connection or distraction can quickly spiral into something far more insidious: doom scrolling - it is the act of binging on negative or distressing news and social media content.

The internet, while offering support and information, can also amplify the feelings of social comparison and the pressure to become the 'perfect' mum with the 'perfect' baby. Negative news about illness, violence or global crises can feel especially overwhelming when one is already in a heightened emotional state. Algorithms feed users more of what they engage with, meaning one anxious search can lead to a flood of distressing content.

Here are some gentle, practical ways that could help: setting app time limits; unfollowing accounts that trigger anxiety; swapping scrolling with podcasts, audiobooks, music or journaling; seeking real connection with local or virtual mum/parent groups focused on support and reassurance; and if scrolling feels compulsive or distressing, reach out to your GP.

If you're a new mum reading this, know that you're not alone and that it's okay to unplug. Your peace matters.

## 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 Christine Skeels.

The mother she supported wrote:

*"She was amazing. I felt heard, I felt like I wasn't going crazy, and after a couple of calls I felt able to manage a lot better. Even after the first call I felt more at ease. Thank you so much. Her support was invaluable for me and my family. "*

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our wonderful volunteers who help APNI provide support to mothers when they most need it. We could not run the Association without your huge input, for which we are so grateful.

If any mums that APNI has supported, would like to nominate their volunteer for next year's award, please do contact us at the office.

We would like to end with a few lovely quotes from some of the mums we have helped over the years, many of whom are now valued supporters.

***"Keep up your fabulous work, I'm sure it's needed now as much as it was when you supported me after the birth of my son - he's now a strapping 33 year old university lecturer!"***

***"Just continue with the great work and support. Thank you for being there for me and all those parents in need."***

***"Thank you for continuing to campaign for support in this still overlooked area of women's health."***

***"Your work is invaluable in helping new Mums and I'm forever grateful for the kind and generous support I received from Clare."***



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