The APNI Newsletter

October 2026 Issue no.84

NEWS FROM THE OFFICE

As we head into the Autumn months, we have been reflecting on the many women and families who have contacted APNI for support, reassurance and sometimes simply to know they are not alone.

Postnatal illness can be an incredibly isolating experience, however time and again, we see the difference that understanding, kindness and the right support can make.

This year we have continued to grow and develop our work, while always staying true to what has always been at the heart of APNI; listening to women, raising awareness and making sure that postnatal illness is recognised and taken seriously.



We are delighted to introduce you to new team member Irena Smith, who joined last November. Irena wrote: "I am delighted to have joined the APNI team as an Administrative Assistant. Everyone has been incredibly supportive as I have completed my training and familiarised myself with the charity's work and operations.

I find working for a charity incredibly rewarding, and I am excited to contribute to APNI's mission of supporting those affected by postnatal depression. I look forward to being part of the team and making a positive contribution to the important work APNI does."



On 18th November 2025 office staff were delighted to attend "This is also Motherhood", Portraits of Mental Health, Strength and Survival at the Philips Centre in Berkeley Square, London.

The exhibition reveals the hidden realities of motherhood and maternal mental health through portrait photography, still life and audio created by artist Carolyn Mendelsohn in collaboration with ten women with lived experience. Produced by the Maternal Mental Health Alliance, the exhibition raises awareness of perinatal mental illness and offers hope that recovery is possible.

At the end of November APNI staff enjoyed watching "Fox" at the Park Theatre, a one-woman show exploring postnatal depression. We also took part in a panel discussion following the performance. Panellists included Candice Davis (Founder of After Birth London) and Claire Wilson (NIHR Advanced Fellow at King's College London, Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, and Senior Harkness Fellow).



020 7386 0868 info@apni.org www.apni.org @apniuk

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

It was lovely to see plenty of mums in the audience with their babies but sadly only one dad. Topics covered included stigma, why there was a lack of dads in the audience and the essential need for a 'community/village' network and support to be available from early pregnancy and before illness has already taken hold. Also discussed was the importance but underuse of the arts (music, singing, theatre) in healing/recovery within maternal health and the use of AI as an instant companion/support for mums when used safely.

On 11th February 2026, Alice and Yas attended the London Maternity and Midwifery Festival, a fantastic event bringing together professionals from across the maternal health community.

It was a wonderful opportunity to meet doulas, midwives, health visitors, doctors, lecturers and many others dedicated to maternal care. We were delighted to hand out leaflets, make new connections and share more about the importance of support for postnatal depression, as well as the help our charity provides to families who need it. It was a truly inspiring day and a great chance to spread the word about the vital support available to parents.



Yas and Alice

Yas represented APNI at a number of other events, meetings and presentations, including:

- A presentation to Student Midwives at the University of Hertfordshire.
- A presentation to Bexley GPs Practice Managers.
- The July MMHA members meeting.
- A presentation at the Perinatal Mental Health event at the Department of Health and Social Care.

MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

There has been some really positive news in the world of perinatal mental health. After 25 years of campaigning, Northern Ireland is finally set to have its own permanent Mother and Baby Unit. The unit is expected to be open in 2029. Northern Ireland has been the only part of the UK without a permanent MBU so this is hugely important.

A Decade of Voices: Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week 2026

This year's Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week felt particularly special as it celebrated its 10th anniversary. Taking place from 4-10th May, this year's theme, "A Decade of Voices" recognised the thousands of mothers, parents, professionals and campaigners who have spoken openly about their experiences of perinatal mental illness and helped to challenge the stigma that sadly still often surrounds it.

Over the past decade, those voices have helped bring maternal mental health firmly into the spotlight. Awareness has grown, specialist services have expanded and conversations that were rarely heard, are now taking place across healthcare, communities and the media. The MMHA describes its original 'Everyone's Business' campaign as having achieved its core aim of securing the national roll-out of specialist perinatal mental health services.

However, there is still much more to do. The MMHA's work continues to emphasise the importance of ensuring that nobody falls through the gaps in care.

FUNDRAISING



We are enormously grateful to **Elaine Cooke** for her fundraising efforts for APNI. On 28th March 2026 Elaine, joined by her family, friends and Tesco colleagues, walked up PenY-Fan in the Brecon Beacons, in loving memory of her daughter Lauren.



Through her strength, courage and determination, Elaine has raised an amazing £3,900 to support our work, helping us continue to be there for anyone facing postnatal depression, so that no one has to go through it alone. We are truly inspired by her resilience and her commitment to raising awareness and helping others.

We would also like to thank **Anusha Parab** who completed the Robin Hood Half Marathon on 27th September.



Anusha, what an incredible achievement, you did so well. Your determination, energy and positive spirit are an inspiration to us all. Thank you, Anusha, for taking on this amazing challenge. Well done!

APNI relies largely on the generosity of the public to fund our charity. We are always very grateful to receive any donation however large or small and your money contributes directly to helping those suffering from post-natal depression.
If you would like to help us by organising/joining in an event to raise funds, please do get in touch with us. We are also able to provide you with a t-shirt to wear at the event.

THE POWER OF CONNECTION



Recovery from PND can feel incredibly lonely, but connection can be one of the most powerful parts of the journey. Being able to talk openly with someone who understands – whether that is a friend, family member, healthcare professional or peer supporter – can help to lift the sense of isolation. Sometimes, simply knowing that you are not the only person feeling this way, can make a difficult day feel a little more manageable.

Community reminds us that recovery does not have to happen alone. There are small, accessible ways to begin finding support. You could tell someone you trust how you have been feeling and ask them to check in with you regularly. You can speak to your GP, health visitor or midwife about local services. Local children's centres, baby groups and community centres may offer welcoming groups where you can meet other parents without needing to share more than you feel ready to. If leaving home feels difficult, online support groups, helplines and virtual appointments can provide connection from a familiar space. You might ask someone to come with you to a group or appointment, help with childcare or simply sit with you while you make the first call.

Whether it is through a support group, a shared experience, a conversation over a cup of tea or an online community – these connections can become a vital source of hope and reassurance.

This will help mothers and fathers feel seen, heard and supported as they find their way forward.

THE LINDA PAGE UNSUNG HERO AWARD

Each year we invite mums to nominate a volunteer who has made a special difference to them, so that we can show our appreciation with a bouquet of flowers. This year we would like to pay tribute to our wonderful volunteer Lizzie.

This is some of Lizzie's story:

"From the outside, I had everything I had ever wanted: a beautiful, healthy little boy and a life that should have been full of happiness. It was easy for those around me to look at my life and assume that I must be loving every moment. But behind that picture, I was struggling in ways that nobody could see.

My pregnancy had been extremely challenging, followed by a traumatic assisted birth and a very unsettled newborn who was later diagnosed with a milk allergy. I experienced flashbacks from the birth, low moods and an overwhelming sense that I simply wasn't coping.

I still remember my first call to APNI, sitting in my car with my baby screaming in the back. For the first time, someone truly listened. I felt heard and understood, but most importantly, I began to feel that perhaps things might be okay. I was introduced to a volunteer support mum who offered me unwavering, compassionate and non-judgemental support.

Before finding APNI, I had never felt so alone or so misunderstood, and I knew that it was an organisation I wanted to give something back to. I became a volunteer myself, and since then I have had the privilege of supporting numerous mothers through their own postnatal journeys."

At APNI we simply couldn't do what we do without our incredible volunteers like Lizzie, who give their time, energy and compassion to support mothers and families.

you're amazing – thank you

Here are a few of the lovely quotes we have received about our volunteers:

"The most kind and thoughtful person. Checked in regularly, let me know she was there if I needed to talk, lent words of support and encouragement."

"When I was at my lowest, talking to people that understood was just the most helpful thing and my APNI volunteer was the most wonderful person".

"Both my volunteers were brilliant, kind, responsive, down to earth and were just 'there'. I cannot thank them enough!"

"APNI was a lifeline at a dark time. I have gone from feeling as if I was an utter failure to loving and enjoying my baby ."

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As we come towards the end of another year, we would like to wish all our members and readers, a very happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.