Press Release
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FAILURE TO FULLY ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN PREGNANCY AND FOLLOWING CHILDBIRTH COSTS OVER £8 BILLION, REPORT FINDS

Perinatal mental health problems carry a total economic and social long-term cost to society of about £8.1 billion for each one-year cohort of births in the UK, according to a new report ‘The costs of perinatal mental health problems’ released today by the London School of Economics and Centre for Mental Health.

However the report also finds that the NHS would need to spend just £337 million a year to bring perinatal mental health care up to the level recommended in national guidance.

The report is part of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance’s ‘Everyone’s Business’ campaign (www.everyonesbusiness.org.uk), which calls on national Government and local health commissioners to ensure that all women throughout the UK who experience perinatal mental health problems, receive the care they and their families need, wherever and whenever they need it.

Launching officially in Parliament on Tuesday 21st October, the report finds that the costs of mental health problems among women in pregnancy are far greater than previously thought; the cost to the public sector of perinatal mental health problems is five times greater than the cost of providing the services that are needed throughout the United Kingdom.

‘The costs of perinatal mental health problems' finds that:

- Perinatal depression, anxiety and psychosis together carry a total long-term cost to society of about £8.1 billion for each one-year cohort of births in the UK.
Nearly three-quarters (72%) of this cost relates to adverse impacts on the child rather than the mother.

Over a fifth of total costs (£1.7 billion) are borne by the public sector, with the bulk of these falling on the NHS and social services (£1.2 billion).

Other costs include loss of earnings/impact on someone’s ability to work and quality of life affects.

There is clear guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and other national bodies on the treatment of mental illness during and after pregnancy. Yet the current provision is best described as patchy, with significant variations in coverage around the country:

- About half of all cases of perinatal depression and anxiety go undetected and many of those which are detected fail to receive evidence-based forms of treatment.

- Specialist perinatal mental health services are needed for women with complex or severe conditions, but less than 15% of localities provide these at the full level recommended in national guidance and more than 40% provide no service at all. iv

“Perinatal mental health problems are common and costly. They affect up to 20% of women at some point during pregnancy or in the year after childbirth and are a major public health issue impacting on both women and baby. The good news is that women recover when they get the right treatment. It is vital that all women, wherever they live get the specialist help they need.”

Dr Alain Gregoire, Maternal Mental Health Alliance Chair

“Every baby in the UK deserves to have the best possible start in life. Supporting perinatal mental health within a parent infant relationship is critical to lifelong health and happiness for every child.”

Andrea Leadsom MP for South Northamptonshire

“Our findings show that mothers’ mental health is vital to the economy and to society as a whole, particularly because of the potential negative impact that untreated maternal mental
health problems may have on children. In order to protect the family’s long-term health, intervention needs to start before the child is born, or shortly after because the potential benefits are very high and the costs could be fully recovered in a short time frame”

Annette Bauer, LSE’s Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) - lead author of the report

“This report shows there can be no more excuses: national and local authorities, commissioners and governments must act now to ensure specialist perinatal mental health services (in line with national guidelines) are available throughout the UK. Only then can we expect to fully reduce any tragically avoidable human and economic costs.”

Emily Slater, Everyone’s Business Campaign Manager

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For all media enquiries about the report, including interview requests with women who have experienced mental health problems during and after pregnancy, please contact:

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Notes to Editors

i The costs of perinatal mental health problems report is available online Monday 20th October 2014 http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/perinatal and http://www.lse.ac.uk/LSEHealthAndSocialCare/aboutUs/PSSRU/home.aspx

The report was produced by the London School of Economics and Centre for Mental Health for the Everyone’s Business campaign led by the Maternal Mental Health Alliance and funded by Comic Relief.

This figure is based on a calculation for England (£280million) which translates into an estimate for the whole of the UK and is equivalent to spending an extra £407 per child born each year across the UK

In line with national guidelines, a specialist community perinatal mental health service should be multi-disciplinary and feature a consultant perinatal psychiatrist, specialist psychological treatment for the mother and for her relationship with her baby, as well as formal links with local GP, health visitor, midwife and IAPT or equivalent leads and relevant services in the community and voluntary sectors.

Please click here to view the outcome of a recent mapping exercise to assess the levels of specialist community and inpatient perinatal mental health services across the UK from the #everyonesbusiness campaign.