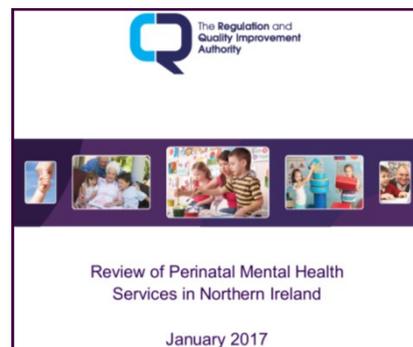


Find Out More

You can read the full report of our findings and recommendations for improvement on our website, or by clicking on the image of our full report.



Our reviews are undertaken as part of RQIA's Three Year Review Programme 2015-2018. Read more about the areas we are reviewing by visiting our website or by clicking on this image.

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Review of Perinatal Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland, January 2017



As part of its 2015-18 review programme, RQIA conducted an independent review of services for women in Northern Ireland who experience mental ill health during or after pregnancy (perinatal mental health). The review examined the implementation and effectiveness of the Perinatal Mental Health Pathway, developed by the Public Health Agency (PHA) in December 2012. RQIA also interviewed a number of service users with mild, moderate and severe perinatal mental health illnesses about their care experience.

While the Belfast Trust provides a small scale specialist perinatal mental health service, there is no regional Mother and Baby Unit inpatient provision in Northern Ireland, or indeed in the Republic of Ireland .

This review makes 11 recommendations for improvement, including the development of specialist services in each trust - with psychological input, and the establishment of a single regional Mother and Baby Unit.



Background

The Royal College of Psychiatrists states that “For the majority of women in Northern Ireland who develop perinatal mental health difficulties, access to and availability of services is reported by them to be limited. Without appropriate support, these women may struggle with many becoming isolated. Some women will go on to develop more marked symptoms and may require more specialist support. The lived experience of women, supported by clear research evidence demonstrates the need for a range of specialist perinatal mental health services.”

RQIA’s review of perinatal mental health services in Northern Ireland was conducted by a team including a consultant perinatal psychiatrist and clinical psychologist. The review team assessed the implementation and effectiveness of the Integrated Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathway (2012) across HSC services from antenatal to post-natal provision including primary, community-secondary, and in-patient care. RQIA examined the provision of these services through engagement with the Department of Health, HSC trusts and the Public Health Agency. Through focus groups and interviews, the review team also considered the first hand experiences of service users, and heard the views of GPs and frontline staff.

Initial findings and recommendations were shared relevant stakeholders, at a summit event in September 2016. A full report of the RQIA’s findings and recommendations was published at www.rqia.org.uk in January 2017.

Findings

RQIA’s review team makes 11 recommendations to support improvement in Northern Ireland’s perinatal mental health services. Key recommendations include:

- The Department of Health should work collaboratively with all key stakeholders - including the Public Health Agency, HSC Trusts, general practitioners and service users to develop and progress a model for the development of specialist perinatal mental health teams in each HSC trust.
- The Department of Health should work collaboratively with all key stakeholders to develop and progress a model for a single regional Mother and Baby Unit in Northern Ireland.
- Key decision makers should visit both specialist teams and a Mother and Baby Unit within the United Kingdom before making any decision on the future provision of perinatal mental health services in Northern Ireland.
- In the absence of a mother and baby unit, HSC trusts should provide appropriate equipment and facilities within all relevant general adult psychiatric inpatient units to meet the needs of a mother and her baby and older children during visits.