
Other

This version is available at: http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/21478/

Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically. Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:
eprints@mdx.ac.uk

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy
The Role of Community Groups in Supporting Women with Maternal Distress

Patricia Jarrett¹, Dr Elena Vacchelli¹, Dr Andreja Mesaric²
P.MJarrett@mdx.ac.uk

Background
Mild to moderate Perinatal Mental Health Problems (PMHP) are common with up to 30 percent of women affected. PMHP have an adverse effect on women, children and families² despite the seriousness of PMHP women often fail to access help from mainstream services. Women report feeling “judged”, believe GPs and midwives are “out of their depth” with mental health issues, and are disillusioned with the treatment options available to them. Women often believe disclosure of PMHP will result in removal of their child. Women’s community groups often provide an alternative service that may be more acceptable for women with mild to moderate PMHP.

Aims
To explore the support provided by community groups to those women experiencing mild to moderate PMHP.

Findings
Pregnant women and new mothers who access community groups in North London, often have a number of complex and interdependent needs which render them particularly vulnerable to PMHP. Community groups offer a “niche” service to women based on their cultural background, religious beliefs, immigration and health status and socioeconomic background. Community groups offer women an intimate and personalised service based on support, trust and respect. Community groups were believed to provide a service to vulnerable women experiencing emotional and mental distress, not provided by mainstream services.

Implications for practice
This small project aimed to understand the support provided by community support groups in the provision of care to women with mild to moderate PMHP. The ethos of community groups differ fundamentally from those of mainstream services. Community groups are believed to be essential in “filling the gaps” in NHS maternity care especially regarding care of women with complex and interdependent needs.

Ethos of Women’s Community Groups

- Women do need reaching out to.
- We listen, we really, really listen.
- We take them as we find them.
- Talking to them, giving of yourself.
- We know what it is like - women respond to that.
- Somebody there for them, not paid, but (special).

Suggested improvements to mainstream services

- “Mainstream services don’t work for vulnerable women”
- “Need service culturally sensitive to needs”
- “Heart-sink patient – GPs heart sinks when he sees them coming through the door”
- “GPs don’t explain and don’t understand the complexity of the problems women present with”
- “PMHP is the result of complex needs and complex problems”
- “People who are most needy don’t access the services they need”
- “Children centres are intimidating, middle class environment, they tend to shy away from them…”

References