



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

## **PICS**

### **Scottish Mothers Win UK Anti-Stigma Award**

A SCOTTISH mental health group has won a UK award for tackling the stigma around perinatal mental health.

The Maternal Mental Health Scotland Change Agents (MMHSCA) have been working over the last three years to remove some of the fear many new and expectant mothers have around saying they're not okay.

The award was announced by Maternal Mental Health Alliance and Mums and Babies in Mind at the first Annual UK Maternal Mental Health Alliance Conference at Imperial College, London last night.

MMHCA have grown from a group of three women, to 30, from all across Scotland in the last three years. They have been involved in the revised Ready Steady Baby pack that is given to every mother in Scotland and worked with the Scottish Government to ensure a leaflet on perinatal mental health is included with the new baby boxes.

But their main work has been in removing the stigma around perinatal mental health, work which was initially funded by See Me, Scotland's programme to end mental health discrimination.

MMHCA say that too many mums keep their struggles to themselves as they are worried about being judged, or even that someone might take their baby away.

Elaine Clark, the clinical adviser to the group, said: "We want people to recognise that experiencing changes with your mental health is part of being pregnant. That can vary from feeling slightly anxious, to experiencing a serious mental illness which might require an admission to hospital.

"But also we want people to know that problems can be prevented if they are picked up early, we want women who need it be referred to seek help throughout pregnancy."

Clare Thompson, who has been with the group since it began, said: "I think the self-stigma around perinatal mental illness stops mothers from trying to get help.

"When you are ill you can think, "I do not want this baby". That is a unique position to be in and you feel really guilty. You don't want to ask for help because it should be all nice and rosy, but it is not. You feel like you have let everyone down because of what this should feel like.

"It can be hard to speak to your family, but everyone's circumstances are different. My family were really supportive, but I still felt guilty and that is part of your illness."

To encourage mums to ask for help MMHCA have created an interactive map which shows where all the help available in Scotland is, including NHS support, peer support from other mothers and third sector organisations.

Calum Irving, See Me director, said: "The Change Agents have done vital work in this area. No one should have to feel ashamed or embarrassed to say they are struggling with their mental health.

"They have shown how important this issue is and are having a positive impact of the lives of parents across Scotland."

Dr Camilla Rosan, programme lead for Families, Children and Young People at the Mental Health Foundation, said: "We had nearly 100 nominations from the public, private and charity sectors. We were looking for projects and services with a creative and innovative approach to perinatal mental health and we found some real heroes."

**ENDS...**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. The MMHA conference, *Intergenerational Mental Health: working with mums and babies in perinatal mental health practice*, is funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund.
2. <https://maternalmentalhealthscotland.org.uk/>

Twitter: @mmhscot

Facebook: <https://m.facebook.com/maternalmentalhealthscotlandchangeagents/>

3. See Me is Scotland's National programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination, enabling people who experience mental health problems to live fulfilled lives.

**We do this by:**

- Mobilising people to work together and lead a movement to end mental health stigma and discrimination
  - Working with people to change negative behaviour towards those with mental health problems
  - Ensuring that the human rights of people with mental health problems are respected and upheld
4. Follow See Me on Twitter @seemescotland or find us on Facebook: Facebook/seemescotland, <http://seemescotland.tumblr.com/>, <https://medium.com/@seemescotland>, or at [www.seemescotland.org](http://www.seemescotland.org)
  5. See Me is managed by SAMH and the Mental Health Foundation and funded by Scottish Government and Comic Relief
  6. We work in partnerships with VOX, the Scottish Mental Health Cooperative and the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival to bring about a meaningful change in behaviours.

