

BASW Social Work in Health (SWiH) Thematic Group



Who we are: We are qualified Social Workers working across Perinatal Mental Health Services in both Community Perinatal Teams and Mother and Baby Units (MBUs). Our team brings a broad range of professional experience, with some Social Workers specialising in child protection and others in adult mental health. Social Workers in perinatal services are recruited into diverse roles, each contributing essential expertise to assessment, care planning, safeguarding, and multi-agency collaboration. By integrating social work values with specialist perinatal knowledge, we support families to navigate vulnerability, enhance safety and wellbeing, and strengthen the parent–infant relationship at this critical stage of life.

What we do: We help families navigate the significant changes that accompany the birth of a child, including shifts in identity, roles, and relationships. We offer compassionate support around postpartum adjustment, parent–infant bonding, and the development of nurturing relationships. We complete holistic assessments to understand emotional, social, and environmental factors affecting families, contributing to tailored, person-centred care plans. We identify and assess risks related to perinatal mental health and work with multidisciplinary teams to ensure timely interventions. We address safeguarding concerns, including domestic abuse, through robust assessment and collaborative safety planning. We connect families with services, community groups, and support networks to build resilience and reduce isolation. We work closely with health professionals, mental health services, and agencies to deliver coordinated care. We promote the rights and autonomy of women and families, ensuring their voices guide decision-making. We provide accessible information so families can understand their options and make informed choices. We challenge systemic inequalities and advocate for equitable access to perinatal care. We work to reduce barriers to care and ensure inclusive, culturally sensitive support. We consider the whole person in their relational and social context, recognising the importance of relationships in promoting wellbeing.

How we work: We place the infant’s needs at the centre of perinatal practice, supporting bonding, attachment, safety, developmental wellbeing, and early relational connection. We work inclusively with partners, co-parents, and significant others, recognising their essential role in supporting the mother/birthing person and infant. Our work includes engagement with grandparents, siblings, kinship networks, and informal support systems. We collaborate closely with perinatal mental health clinicians, maternity services, health visitors, early help teams, children’s and adult social care, GPs, safeguarding teams, substance use and domestic abuse services, housing and community organisations, voluntary sector groups, and—where relevant—prison healthcare and family support services. We act as a bridge between systems, ensuring coordinated, whole-family care.

What we know:

Legislation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children Act 1989/2004 and <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> (2023).• Care Act 2014.• Mental Capacity Act 2005 and Code of Practice.• Mental Health Act 1983 and Code of Practice (2015).• Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and Statutory Guidance.• Equality Act 2010.	Frameworks & Practice Models <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengths-based, person-centred, relational, and whole-family (Think Family).• Trauma-informed care and safeguarding frameworks.• Knowledge of perinatal mental health disorders, medication considerations, and parent–infant relationships.• Understanding domestic abuse dynamics, including coercive control and impact during pregnancy.• Child protection thresholds, multi-agency working, and national standards.• Adult safeguarding duties.
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