



# Press release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday 9 October 2023

## 1 in 3 women with perinatal mental health issue felt 'dismissed' by healthcare professional

*Charity PANDAS is launching new template letter for parents to take to their GP*

**Research by leading perinatal mental health charity PANDAS Foundation shows that one in three mums felt dismissed by a healthcare professional when trying to discuss their mental health concerns.**

The shocking statistic is released by the charity as part of PANDAS Awareness Week (9th-15th October), which aims to shine a spotlight on perinatal mental health - including pre and postnatal depression and anxiety, maternal OCD and Birth Trauma.

With NHS mental health services increasingly under pressure and with long waiting times, many new parents aren't getting vital early intervention or, with GPs feeling under pressure, are feeling dismissed that their concerns about their health aren't being taken seriously.

In response, the charity has collaborated with [Dr Punam Krishan](#), resident doctor on BBC's Morning Live, and [Make Birth Better](#) to produce a template letter which parents can take to their GP/healthcare provider in an effort to relieve pressure on individuals explaining how they are feeling.

Annie Belasco, head of PANDAS, said: "Perinatal mental health is a critical issue that affects countless parents, and it's disheartening to learn that one in three women felt dismissed when reaching out for help.





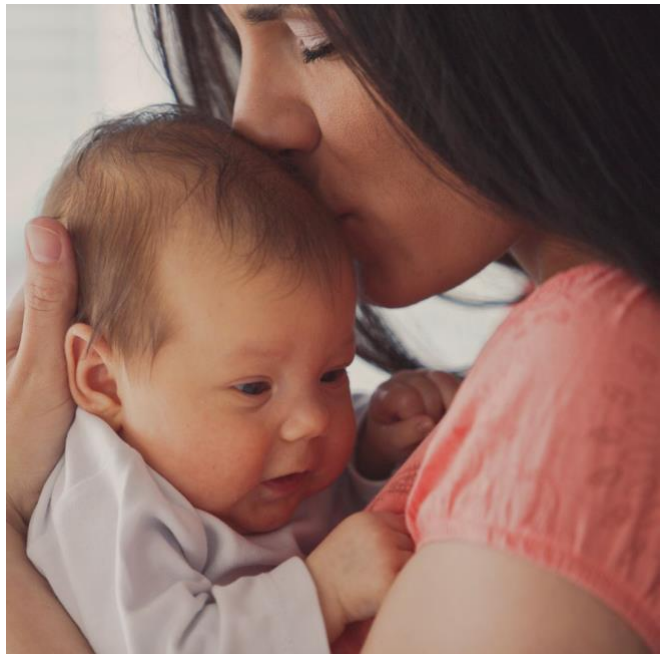
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“During PANDAS Awareness Week, we want to emphasise the importance of taking perinatal mental health seriously. Postnatal depression and anxiety can have devastating consequences, and we're committed to advocating for early intervention.

“We hope our collaboration with Dr Punam Krishan and the template letter will empower parents to seek the support they need.

“PANDAS Foundation is here to ensure that no one feels alone in their journey towards recovery. We often hear from those who have recovered, 'I didn't know PANDAS existed when I was ill,' and our mission is to change that for future parents facing these challenges.”

The letter template launch coincides with PANDAS Awareness Week (9th-15th October), where the theme this year is *Whatever the Weather* - reflecting on PANDAS support services being there for parents and carers at all times.



Dr Punam said: “Parenthood is full of ups and downs. Whilst we're good at sharing the ups, we need to get better at sharing the downs which is why I love and support PANDAS's 'Whatever the Weather' campaign because when it all feels too much, reaching out for support is the most powerful medicine there is.”

The research by PANDAS also shows:

- 49% of respondents were dissatisfied with the medical professional they saw;
- 24% felt their concerns weren't taken seriously at an initial appointment with a medical professional;
- 30% weren't seen within an acceptable timeframe

Postnatal depression, anxiety and intrusive thoughts can lead to new parents feeling like they are unable to bond with their baby. According to the Maternal Mental Health Alliance, sadly suicide is still the number one cause of death within the first year of maternity. However, PANDAS Foundation actively campaigns for early intervention and we know it is the key to a successful recovery.



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PANDAS - which stands for Postnatal Depression Awareness and Support - is an expanding small charity run by people who have experience of perinatal mental illness. It offers a number of free support services via phone, WhatsApp, email and online and in-person support groups across the UK for both mums and dads.

Comments from people who took part in the survey include:

- *I felt so lonely... My trip to the local GP was a really hard step for me to take. I was offered medication after my 10 minute consultation and told to fill in an online questionnaire and given a meditation website. I was so upset coming from there, the GP said all mothers get anxious and tired and that's part of becoming a parent. I felt very broken and not normal.*
- *Having had no mental health issues before having my son, I was completely floored by post-natal depression and post-traumatic stress from a difficult birth. My health visitor was amazing but I was pushed between GP services and the perinatal specialist team as I was told I wasn't "unwell enough" for the specialist as I wasn't actively planning to end my life. When I was eventually referred and seen, I felt like a time waster taking resources away from those who were truly unwell enough.*
- *I felt extremely lost and confused after giving birth in 2022. Help from my GP was non-existent, they were not interested in anything I raised to them in my six-week check. I went to my health visitor instead who guided me down a self referral path, which ultimately led me to a team of brilliant supportive perinatal mental health professionals*

The template letter is being launched during PANDAS Awareness Week (9-15<sup>th</sup> October) and will then be available for free download via the [PANDAS website](#).

## Notes to editors:

- Interviews with spokespeople and case studies are available - please contact us to arrange
- For more info on the charity, visit [pandasfoundation.org.uk](https://pandasfoundation.org.uk)