Our Peer Support Training Framework.

Professionally informed, shaped by lived experience and designed for safe, compassionate support during pregnancy and early parenthood.

WHERE OUR TRAINING COMES FROM

PANDAS training was originally developed with perinatal healthcare professionals, subject matter trustees, employees and specialist providers, drawing on NHS peer support approaches and learning from the Institute of Health Visiting. Volunteer feedback led to a strategic review around three years ago, when we worked with With-you Consultancy to strengthen our non-clinical peer-support approach.

OUR PEER SUPPORT PRINCIPLES

Our approach draws on mutuality, reciprocity, authenticity, choice, empowerment, hope, lived experience and respect. Volunteers provide connection, listening and appropriate signposting alongside NHS care, without taking on clinical responsibilities.

THE THREE TRAINING PILLARS

PILLAR 1 | PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH, SAFEGUARDING & CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The essential knowledge and safer-working foundations for every PANDAS volunteer:

- Perinatal depression and anxiety, postpartum psychosis, birth trauma, maternal rage and emotional wellbeing.
- DBS checks within safer recruitment; mandatory safeguarding training, confidentiality and escalation routes.
- Cultural barriers, stigma, racism, discrimination, language and unequal access to mental health services.
- Anti-racist and inclusive support for disabled, neurodivergent and minoritised parents.
- Active listening, appropriate use of lived experience, clear boundaries and safe signposting.

PILLAR 2 | CONTRIBUTING FACTORS & FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES

Understanding the wider experiences that may affect perinatal wellbeing:

- Previous mental health difficulties, antenatal anxiety, childhood trauma and adverse experiences.
- Isolation, limited partner or family support, domestic abuse and relationship difficulties.
- Financial pressures, debt, employment uncertainty, housing insecurity and major life events.
- Hyperemesis gravidarum (HG), pregnancy stress, traumatic birth and bereavement.
- Premature birth, neonatal care, babies with additional needs, feeding difficulties and younger parenthood.

PILLAR 3 | SPECIALIST LEARNING & SAFE PEER-SUPPORT DELIVERY

Role-specific skills and specialist subjects for community and remote services:

- Baby loss, miscarriage, grief, birth trauma and neonatal intensive care experiences.
- Domestic abuse, suicide and self-harm awareness, crisis response and safeguarding escalation.
- Group facilitation, managing incidents, difficult conversations and welcoming group environments.
- Digital and one-to-one support, confidentiality, GDPR and responsible communications.
- Boundaries, reflective practice, supervision, volunteer wellbeing and informed signposting.

SAFEGUARDING AND PROFESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

Safeguarding is embedded throughout all three pillars, supported by management training, two annually reviewed safeguarding policies, Safeguarding Manager oversight, supervision and a Serious Incident Policy. Redesigned modules are being developed for professional review, approval and certification as the phased programme progresses through March 2027.

The three pillars support a consistent, non-clinical PANDAS volunteer role that complements NHS and community services.