

# Information and support following a difficult birth

Maternity and Neonatal  
Psychological Interventions  
Service (MNPI)



## **When you've had a difficult birth**

When you become pregnant you will have had hopes and ideas about your pregnancy, birth and what meeting your baby will be like. Sometimes, parts of your experience are different to what you expected or hoped. When this happens, you might feel lots of different emotions. You may even find it difficult to think or talk about your experience.

If you have had a difficult experience, it can take time for you to understand and cope with what has happened.

These feelings normally settle down with time.



## Some things you might experience after a difficult birth

- Replaying the birth in your mind, e.g. unwanted images or flashbacks, nightmares
- Avoiding things to do with the birth, e.g. talking about it, thinking about it or not going back to places you associate with it (e.g. medical appointments)
- Feeling sad, irritable, worried or numb
- Struggling to bond with your baby or feeling fearful of being apart from your baby
- Feeling tense and on edge
- Poor sleep
- Negative thoughts about yourself, your body or the birth
- Worrying a lot about bad things happening to yourself or your baby

Whilst many of these experiences are normal in the early days and weeks, they can feel quite distressing. Remember these feelings normally settle down with time.

## **What can help?**

- Speak to your partner, friends, family or someone you trust about it and how you feel
- Find out as much as you can about what happened from your birth partner or maternity team
- Write down your experience or thoughts and feelings about this
- Take time to look after yourself
- Be kind to yourself – having a baby is a life changing event. It takes time to get used to, even if everything has gone well or as you'd hoped

## **Coping with unwanted images or flashbacks**

- Remember that the event is now in the past
- Tell yourself that the worst is now over
- Use 'grounding' strategies, e.g. focus on your breathing, name objects in the room or pay attention to what is happening around you - what you can see, hear, feel, smell

## **Who can help?**

You can talk to your Maternity Team, GP or Health Visitor. They can help you understand and cope with what has happened.

They may also refer you to other services for further help.

## **When to seek further help**

- If your thoughts and feelings about the birth are causing distress and having a big impact on your life, e.g. stopping you from doing things or going places
- If you are worried it is impacting on your bond with your baby or babies
- If these symptoms get worse even with support from your friends, family and Health Visitor or GP
- If these symptoms do not improve after about 12 weeks

Your Maternity Team, GP or Health Visitor may refer you to the MNPI Service or another helpful service.

## **Helpful resources**

You may find it helpful to visit these websites. They have lots of information and tips for how to support your wellbeing.

### **Wellbeing Services**

 [www.wellbeing-glasgow.org.uk](http://www.wellbeing-glasgow.org.uk)  
(self-help section)

### **Inspiring Scotland**

 <https://inspiringscotland.org.uk/perinatal-mental-health-services/>