

Case study



Setting up the Scottish Perinatal Mental Health Occupational Therapy Professional Group

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Lindsay Noble

Setting up the Scottish Perinatal Mental Health Occupational Therapy Professional Group

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde



Lindsay Noble

About Lindsay

Throughout her career, Lindsay Noble has worked with people with mental health problems across all ages.

While working in an early intervention psychosis service, Lindsay became aware of the complex needs of new mothers with mental health problems.

At the time, perinatal mental health services in Scotland were at an early stage of development. There were only two specialist inpatient facilities, mostly staffed by psychiatrists, nurses and nursery workers.

Driven to improve her own practice, Lindsay began an MSc in Perinatal Mental Health. She completed two

modules at Glasgow Caledonian University before transferring to an MSc Advanced Practice course.

In 2014 this led Lindsay to become one of only two perinatal mental health occupational therapists across Scotland, working in the West of Scotland Mother and Baby Unit.

Lindsay's networks and expert knowledge positioned her perfectly to take on the role of Lead OT, undertaking supervision and professional leadership of the perinatal mental health OTs in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

About the innovation

In 2019, the Scottish Government made recommendations about how perinatal services should be delivered and released funding to enhance multi-disciplinary input, including occupational therapy (NHS Scotland 2019).

In the past two years, almost all 14 Health Boards in Scotland have employed OTs in their perinatal mental health services or are working towards this.

Many of the OTs in these roles are new to the specialism. The posts were isolated because of the large geographical area they cover.

In response, Lindsay and two other OT colleagues in Scotland used their networks through the health boards. They contacted the new OTs and their managers and created a virtual group.

The professional group is supported by the Perinatal Mental Health Network (PMHN) Scotland. This national managed clinical network focuses on partnership working, developing expertise, equity of care and delivering the best outcomes.

The professional group was publicised in the PMHN newsletter to encourage OTs to join. This group, named the Scottish Perinatal Occupational Therapy Professional Group and was officially formed in May 2020. This network of occupational therapists meets regularly to:

- maintain clarity and consistency about the occupational therapy role
- develop clear care pathways across geographical locations
- share good practice and learning
- offer peer support
- anonymous complex case discussion.

The PMHN Scotland approached the group to develop the role definitions, detailing the specialist input of the OT.

This recognised the unique contribution of OT in:

- understanding the occupational needs of the parent, infant and other family members
- promoting co-occupation which is powerful in facilitating parent infant relationships
- supporting mothers to set goals, enabling them to manage their daily routines and better care for themselves and their children.

An update of the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Services in Scotland has been published in 2023. It includes the involvement of occupational therapy in Perinatal Mental Health Services (Scottish Government 2023).

Impact

In the last two years, significant improvements have been seen in the quality of perinatal mental health occupational therapy services across Scotland. The OTs use a variety of measures including the Occupational Self-Assessment, Model of Human Occupation Screening Tool, CORE-10 and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to measure this.

One group member describes the OT online support group that she attends as 'my safe space to share everything. I've not felt judged as you do with other kind of mum's groups.'

Another group member who attended an occupational therapy-led group named Ready Steady Walk and Rhyme said, 'The book bug session helped me with doing more with my baby. The group has made me feel more confident about taking the bus so I can go to more places with my baby.'

The role of the OT is now clearly defined in a published definition. This has been used by health boards to establish new occupational therapy roles to formulate job descriptions and promote them nationally. OTs have also used them to establish themselves in multidisciplinary teams and evaluate their learning needs.

Role Definitions – Perinatal Mental Health Network Scotland.

The number of OTs working in specialist perinatal mental health services have increased from three to ten posts across the whole of Scotland. This has meant

a significant improvement in mental health support to women, infants and families.

The increased networking that the professional group provides has created better continuity of care and enhanced transitions for women who are moving from inpatient to community settings.

Angela Kandyba, (member of the Scottish Perinatal Occupational Therapy Professional Group), says:

'The professional group has provided an excellent opportunity for networking across the variety of perinatal working environments that have OT posts. As this is a developing field for our profession it has been invaluable to have this opportunity for peer learning and support.'

Within my own practice in the West of Scotland Mother and Baby Unit it can provide enhanced patient care through liaison between inpatient and community, to ease the referral process and allow information to be shared.'

Emma Craig, (member of the Scottish Perinatal Occupational Therapy Professional Group), says:

'Since taking up the role as Specialist OT in the Community Perinatal Team, I have found the professional group to be a key resource which has supported my integration into this new field of practice. The opportunity to network with my colleagues within the professional group supports my learning and development and allows a safe place for complex case discussion and reflection.'

Feeling inspired to pilot your own innovation?

Share your ideas with the **RCOT Innovation Hub** who can offer support along your journey and share learning more widely.

References

Scottish Government (2019) Delivering effective services: needs assessment and service recommendations for Specialist and universal perinatal mental health [PMHN-Needs-Assessment-Report.pdf \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/pmh/PMHN-Needs-Assessment-Report.pdf)

Scottish Government (2023) Perinatal and infant mental health services: update. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/perinatal-infant-mental-health-services-update/documents/>