

A consensus statement on perinatal mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and recommendations for post-pandemic recovery and re-build

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Abstract

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The COVID-19 pandemic posed a significant lifecourse rupture, not least to those who had specific physical vulnerabilities to the virus, but also to those who were suffering with mental ill health. Women and birthing people who were pregnant, experienced a perinatal bereavement, or were in the first postpartum year (i.e. perinatal), were exposed to a number of risk factors for mental ill health, including alterations to the way in which their perinatal care was delivered. Methods: A consensus statement was derived from a cross-disciplinary collaboration of experts, whereby evidence from collaborative work into perinatal mental health

during the COVID-19 pandemic was synthesised, and priorities were established as recommendations for research, healthcare practice, and policy. The synthesis of research focused on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on perinatal health outcomes and care practices led to three immediate recommendations: what to retain, what to reinstate, and what to remove from perinatal mental healthcare provision. Longer-term recommendations for action were also made, categorised as follows: Equity and Relational

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34 **Abstract**

35 *Introduction:* The COVID-19 pandemic posed a significant lifecourse rupture, not least to those who
36 had specific physical vulnerabilities to the virus, but also to those who were suffering with mental ill
37 health. Women and birthing people who were pregnant, experienced a perinatal bereavement, or were
38 in the first postpartum year (i.e. perinatal), were exposed to a number of risk factors for mental ill
39 health, including alterations to the way in which their perinatal care was delivered.

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42 whereby evidence from collaborative work into perinatal mental health during the COVID-19
43 pandemic was synthesised, and priorities were established as recommendations for research, healthcare
44 practice, and policy.

45
46 *Results:* The synthesis of research focused on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on perinatal health
47 outcomes and care practices led to three immediate recommendations: what to retain, what to reinstate,
48 and what to remove from perinatal mental healthcare provision. Longer-term recommendations for
49 action were also made, categorised as follows: Equity and Relational Healthcare; Parity of Esteem in
50 Mental and Physical Healthcare with an Emphasis on Specialist Perinatal Services; and Horizon
51 Scanning for Perinatal Mental Health Research, Policy, & Practice.

52
53 *Discussion:* The evidence-base on the effect of the pandemic on perinatal mental health is growing.
54 This consensus statement synthesises said evidence and makes recommendations for post-pandemic
55 recovery and re-build of perinatal mental health services and care provision.

56
57 **Keywords:** Consensus statement; COVID-19; Perinatal mental health; Women's health

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67 **1 Introduction**

68 The COVID-19 pandemic presented an unprecedented health system shock to the world between
69 January 2020 and May 2023. Although first detected in Wuhan, China, on 31 December 2019 (Public
70 Health England; PHE, 2020), the virus – a respiratory disease with high mortality risk for individuals
71 with pre-existing comorbidities (Elliott et al., 2021) – spread quickly, worldwide. Concerns about
72 mortality and spread of the novel virus prompted a global, co-ordinated implementation of social and
73 physical distancing restrictions. Meanwhile, research efforts turned towards vaccine development
74 (WHO, 2021b), understanding the health system shock and the possible ramifications for short-,
75 medium-, and long-term health, especially as the world braced for the further pandemic of mental
76 health issues caused by the virus and associated fears, bereavements, and restrictions (Adhanom
77 Ghebreyesus, 2020). Maternity care was significantly disrupted during Government-mandated
78 lockdown restrictions (Jardine et al., 2020). Social and physical distancing restrictions interrupted
79 access to routine maternity care, and adversely impacted perinatal mental health (Hessami et al., 2022;
80 Racine et al., 2021) and child development (Benner & Mistry, 2020; Liu & Fisher, 2022). Worryingly,
81 these restrictions saw increased instances of child neglect, child abuse, and domestic abuse risk
82 (Thomas et al., 2020), restricted access to reproductive healthcare (including abortion services; Qaderi
83 et al., 2023); and increase in maternal morbidity (Vousden et al., 2022) and serious adverse obstetric
84 events such as stillbirths (Homer et al., 2021; Khalil et al., 2020). Further, the potential for maternity
85 staff to experience work-related trauma and subsequent PTSD is likely to have been exacerbated,
86 beyond levels already recognized as significant (Sheen et al., 2015; Sheen et al., 2022, Slade et al.,
87 2018). The extent of longer-term impacts of the pandemic, however, are yet to be fully realised and
88 may take years to be understood completely.

89 This article presents a consensus statement on amassed evidence from research and syntheses on
90 perinatal mental health undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic. We suggest recommendations in
91 the form of what healthcare policy, services, and professionals should retain, reinstate, and remove
92 from their care provision in the immediate period of post-pandemic recovery and re-build. We also
93 provide guidance on longer-term recommendations for practice.

94

95 **2 Methods**

96 This consensus statement was originally conceived by a collective of cross-disciplinary researchers
97 (Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Sociologists, Anthropologists, Midwives, Obstetricians, Obstetric
98 Physicians, Physiologists, and Patient Advocates; mainly based in London and Liverpool, UK) who,
99 in late-2020/early-2021 wanted to synthesise evidence from research they had conducted during the

100 early stages of the pandemic about how it had affected perinatal mental health outcomes, services, and
101 care. They secured funding from the Society for Reproductive and Infant Psychology – via a Research
102 Development Workshop Grant (ref:- SRIP/DWA/01) – to do so, which contributed to the second origin
103 – a policy-oriented research dissemination event held at The Royal Society of Medicine [The RSM] in
104 London on 22 September 22. The RSM event was hosted by PIVOT-AL: a national collaborative in
105 the UK of over 60 researchers, academics, policy makers, and members of third sector organisations
106 from more than 25 institutions (see *Figure 1*). During the pandemic, the collaborative undertook
107 research focused on the impact of the pandemic on maternal, child, and family health, healthcare
108 professionals, and service provision. A formal synthesis of this evidence on perinatal mental health
109 was presented as a key part of the programme at The RSM event. This consensus statement provides a
110 summary of this evidence and identifies priorities for future research, policy, and healthcare practice.

111 A recognised approach for deriving consensus statements is usually to construct a panel of
112 experts amongst whom ideas are shared with a focus on establishing priorities for research, healthcare
113 practice, and policy (Manera et al., 2019). Discussions at this event were based on the expert knowledge
114 of attendees and enhanced by patient and public involvement and engagement [PPIE] at both the event
115 and in writing the statement. The cross-disciplinary nature of the group allowed for a breadth and depth
116 of perspectives to be represented. The authors recognise that whilst this synthesis is extensive, it is not
117 exhaustive of all the research efforts which took place in perinatal mental health services across the
118 UK during the COVID-19 pandemic. Neither does it reach into global literature – which is equally
119 important, but would be inappropriate to incorporate as part of an assessment into UK policy and
120 practice. Therefore, this statement does not aim to provide a comprehensive nor systematic review of
121 the literature-base, but rather represents an overview of issues and priorities discussed by attendees at
122 the dissemination event. Indeed, the statement presents the consensus reached by academics and
123 clinical experts who authored the literature included in the synthesis and by those present at the
124 dissemination event.



131 *Figure 1:* The PIVOT-AL Logo

132 3 Available Evidence

133 The perinatal mental health research captured by The PIVOT-AL National Collaborative primarily
134 focused on postpartum mental health and the transition into new motherhood during the COVID-19
135 pandemic. However, extensive efforts have also spanned psycho-social experiences of pregnancy and
136 childbirth, incidences of domestic abuse and violence, support requirements of perinatal mental health
137 staff and services during mandated social and physical distancing restrictions.

138 One of the earliest PIVOT-AL investigative efforts was The Pregnancy and Motherhood Study
139 (PRaM; Fallon et al., 2021). A large, on-line, national survey was distributed to pregnant and
140 postpartum women during initial mandated lockdown restrictions (UK Government, 2020a), during
141 the initial easing of social distancing restrictions (UK Government, 2020b), and post-‘Freedom Day’
142 (defined as the easing of all legal restrictions on social contact; UK Government, 2021). The PRaM
143 Study involved the distribution of a battery of psychometric measures (Fallon et al., 2021; Silverio et
144 al., 2021), with nested qualitative interviews in accordance with the corresponding mandated lockdown
145 restrictions (Jackson et al., 2021; 2023).

146 Quantitative findings indicated 43% and 61% of postpartum women were experiencing
147 clinically relevant levels of depression and anxiety symptoms, respectively (Fallon et al., 2021).
148 Perceived psychological change, resulting from the introduction of social distancing measures,
149 predicted unique variance in the risk of clinically relevant maternal depression (30%) and anxiety
150 symptoms (33%), respectively (Fallon et al., 2021). These data were consistent with UK-data found in
151 global comparisons of perinatal mental health data as reported by a consortium of the RISEUP-PPD
152 Network, where the UK consistently ranked highly amongst reports of increased symptoms of perinatal
153 anxiety and depression (Mateus et al., 2022). The PRaM Study also rapidly developed and validated a
154 research short form of the Postpartum Specific Anxiety Scale for use in global crises (PSAS-RSF-C;
155 Silverio et al., 2021). This short-form was translated into Chinese, Dutch, French, Italian, and Spanish
156 (Silverio et al., 2021), and validations are underway including in Persian (PSAS-IR-RSF-C;
157 Mashayekh-Amiri et al., 2023).

158 Qualitatively, The PRaM Study found postpartum women continued to experience distress
159 throughout the pandemic, despite the easing of social distancing restrictions (Jackson et al., 2021).
160 Lack of support for the schooling of older children was particularly inflammatory to maternal mental
161 health and wellbeing disturbance (Jackson et al., 2021). Antenatally, respondents were consistent
162 across timepoints in feeling their pregnancy was overshadowed by uncertainties pertaining to the
163 pandemic, which left respondents grieving for the loss of the kind of transition to motherhood which
164 they would have had in the absence of mandated lockdown restrictions (Jackson et al., 2023).

165 Echoing these findings, an analysis of qualitative data from women recruited to The King's
166 Together Fund Changing Maternity Care Study identified tensions between good and poor practices,
167 which affected perinatal psycho-social wellbeing (Montgomery et al., 2023). Results included dyadic
168 pairs of experiences as women struggled to navigate the uncertainties of the pandemic and pregnancy,
169 alone. Dyadic pairs included: 'lack of relational care vs. good practice persisting during the pandemic';
170 'denying the embodied experience of pregnancy and birth vs. trying to keep everyone safe'; and
171 'removed from support network vs. importance of being at home as a family' (Montgomery et al.,
172 2023). Consistent with other PIVOT-AL works, the realities of maternity care were disappointing
173 compared to expectations and experiences before the pandemic, which exacerbated distress
174 (Montgomery et al., 2023). Lack of access to relational care, introduction of telemedicine and reliance
175 on virtual appointments, and the exclusion of partners from routine care were particularly challenging
176 for emotional well-being. This was despite acknowledgement of the pressures placed on healthcare
177 professionals and on NHS services during the unprecedented times of the pandemic (Montgomery et
178 al., 2023). Lack of access to emergency and gynaecological care has also been flagged as being
179 detrimental to the care of early pregnancy loss and later perinatal deaths (Rimmer et al., 2020; Silverio,
180 Easter, et al., 2021).

181 A critical review and mapping of service provision suggested perinatal distress had increased,
182 which was attributable to the increasing inaccessibility of support services (Bridle et al., 2022).
183 However, this was occasionally countered by services providing reconfigured and/or extended
184 perinatal mental health services. As healthcare transitioned from pandemic to para-pandemic
185 circumstances, it was imperative to provide support for perinatal mental health professionals within
186 the context of developing new post-pandemic services (Bridle et al., 2022). Some women struggled to
187 engage with virtual mental health assessments in perinatal mental health services (Wilson et al., 2021).
188 This was especially concerning for circumstances whereby virtual appointments prevented disclosure
189 of urgent needs and risks e.g., in cases of domestic abuse (Wilson et al., 2021). However, for women
190 who struggled with the practicalities of attending face-to-face consultations e.g., due to travel time,
191 virtual appointments offered a flexible and well-received alternative (Wilson et al., 2021).

192 Maintaining perinatal mental health services was found to be challenging for ethnic minority
193 women, who experienced many difficulties and disruptions to accessing perinatal mental health care,
194 which exacerbated pre-existing challenges such as living in insecure social housing and experiencing
195 financial hardship (Pilav, Easter, et al., 2022). Most had a strong preference for face-to-face
196 consultations, and experienced high levels of social isolation and heightened anxiety as the pandemic
197 continued (Pilav, Easter, et al., 2022). A large study was also conducted which utilised linked maternity

198 and mental health records held within the Early Life Cross-Linkage in Research (eLIXIR) database
199 (Carson et al., 2020). Data from three NHS Foundation Trusts (including one Mental Health Trust) in
200 South London comprise the eLIXIR database (Carson et al., 2020; Hildersley et al., 2022). Research
201 using an interrupted time series study design found that recording of domestic abuse and violence
202 during national lockdown restrictions reduced by 78% in mental healthcare settings. There was also an
203 increased prevalence of positive screening on the Whooley depression screening measure, by 40%, in
204 the same period (Hildersley et al., 2022).

205 A large body of international work investigating the effects of the pandemic on new, expectant
206 and bereaved parents (COCOON; Loughnan et al., 2022) is underway, complete with a nested
207 qualitative study (PUDDLES; Silverio, Easter, et al., 2021) which focuses on the experiences of women
208 bereaved by pregnancy loss (e.g. early elective abortion, pregnancy of unknown location, miscarriage,
209 ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, or termination of pregnancy due to foetal anomaly) or perinatal
210 death (stillbirth and neonatal death). Results specifically linked to the mental health outcomes are
211 pending, but will provide important insight into another aspect of perinatal mental health, not otherwise
212 covered by the information synthesised above.

213 Whilst there has been much evidence to support worsening conditions for perinatal mental health
214 care and support during the pandemic, the ending of the global health crises allows a period of
215 reflection and re-set for recovery and re-build out of the health system shock. What follows are
216 recommendations for immediate action, followed by longer-term recommendations for policy, service
217 provision and research.

218

219 **4 Discussion of Recommendations**

220 **4.1 Immediate Action**

221 **4.1.1 What to Retain**

222 Access to essential reproductive services such as contraception and abortion (Baxter et al., 2023;
223 Romanis & Parsons, 2020), ensuring high levels of relational care are prioritised in healthcare service
224 and delivery (Bridle et al., 2022; Montgomery et al., 2023), and redoubling efforts to ensure perinatal
225 and infant mental health are given the parity of esteem of physical health concerns (House of
226 Commons, 2023) are recommended for retention in line with other calls for prioritisation of specialist
227 women's mental health care (Alderdice, 2020; Howard & Khalifeh, 2020; Department of Health &
228 Social Care, 2022). Communication of health messaging to families should continue to be clear,
229 concise, and consistent, and the option for remote care provision should be maintained (Pilav, Easter,

230 et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2021). However, this should be offered in-line with clinical decision-making
231 around safety and appropriateness for individual women and birthing people.

232

233 **4.1.2 What to Reinstate**

234 At a system level, reinstating time for processing and reflection on new directives for service delivery
235 as well as including healthcare professionals' and service user voice, is important across all aspects of
236 healthcare serving perinatal women (Silverio et al., 2023). This will enable teams to consider how best
237 to implement new service provisions. Bi-directional communication between central NHS
238 management, individual Trusts, and healthcare professionals is recommended to optimise satisfaction
239 with care and workplace satisfaction for staff (Bridle et al., 2022). Within this, the voices of perinatal
240 women and birthing people must also be heard and their perspectives on prospective changes must be
241 sought. Recommendations are also made to reinstate healthcare professionals' autonomy and
242 professional judgement in providing empathic, evidence-based care; including professional judgement
243 on when to use remote versus in-person care (Silverio et al., 2023; Wilson et al., 2021).

244 During the pandemic, a large proportion of healthcare professionals were displaced within their
245 services to provide support to COVID-19 wards (Montgomery et al., 2023) and early pregnancy and/or
246 gynaecological services were dramatically rationalised (Rimmer et al., 2020). Maternity care was
247 consequently stripped of vital service provision by specialist midwives for mental health and
248 bereavement care (Bridle et al., 2022). Evidence from the PIVOT-AL collaborative highlights the
249 importance of protecting healthcare professionals across all aspects of perinatal care services from re-
250 deployment to ensure a full complement of staff is available to perinatal women/people, their babies,
251 and their families (Bridle et al., 2022). This also requires recognising the importance of quality,
252 holistic, postpartum care, specifically in the community (Pilav, Easter, et al., 2022). To re-establish
253 these priorities, face-to-face care and support should be reinstated (Hildersley et al., 2022; Jackson et
254 al., 2021, 2023), and should remain the dominant form of care provision.

255 Finally, re-introducing consented partners, family members, and/or other trusted support (e.g.
256 friends, Doulas, etc.), should be prioritised across all interactions across the perinatal period (Bridle et
257 al., 2022; Montgomery et al., 2023; Silverio, Easter et al., 2021). Importantly, this form of support
258 should be seen as part of the caregiving team and not simply visitors, and should be regarded as a basic
259 birthing right, never again to be removed.

260

261 **4.1.3 What to Remove**

262 Firstly, recommendations are made to cease blanket or ‘one size fits all’ policies from being rolled-out
263 across all services, without consideration of variation in demographic need or accessibility to essential
264 support services (Pilav, Easter, et al., 2022), as this would lead to inequitable health services. During
265 the pandemic, ethical, moral, and relational care was replaced by priorities of infection control (Bridle
266 et al., 2022; Montgomery et al., 2023) – thereby swapping a broad notion of safety which encompassed
267 women’s psychological safety, for one bearing a narrow definition focused on the notion that safety
268 was synonymous with not spreading the infection, and prioritising prevention of COVID-deaths above
269 other serious and potentially fatal risks, such as severe mental health episodes, domestic abuse and
270 violence, and suicide.

271 At this time, personalised care was often deprioritised (Jackson et al., 2021; 2023). Considering
272 these findings, recommendations are made to cease the provision of exclusively virtual or remote care
273 (Montgomery et al., 2023), and the exclusion of wanted birth partners (Bridle et al., 2022).
274 Furthermore, confusing and conflicting messaging between Government organisations, the Royal
275 Colleges, individual Trusts, and other Learned Academies, has been a consistent issue (Montgomery
276 et al., 2023). When national public health messaging is necessary, disinformation and/or conflicting
277 information must be stopped as a matter of utmost importance (Jackson et al., 2021; 2023). Messaging
278 must be consistent from policy to practice, and policy makers and healthcare professionals must be
279 agile enough to interpret and implement change in a uniform way.

280

281 **4.2 Longer-Term Recommendations**

282 **4.2.1 Equity and Relational Healthcare**

283 Equitable, relational care should be offered to all in the perinatal community (House of Commons,
284 2023), with special consideration made for populations who struggle to access healthcare (e.g., women
285 from ethnic and sexual minority groups or those living with high levels of social complexity or in areas
286 with high levels of social deprivation), who may be particularly avoidant of using perinatal mental
287 health services (Pilav, Easter, et al., 2022). Support for women, birthing people, and their families
288 should be curated, based on personalised needs assessments in circumstances of high physical, mental,
289 or social risk (Jackson et al., 2021; 2023). It would be prudent also to maintain focus not just on the
290 health of women and birthing people, but also to attend to the established relationship between parental,
291 child health, and wider family health; acknowledging the reciprocal nature of the caregiver-infant
292 mental health outcomes (Landoni et al., 2022) and ensuring healthcare professionals are working
293 holistically (Bridle et al., 2022) and with the whole family to be proactive and intervene before families

294 reach crisis point (Hogg & Mayes, 2022). We must also give greater energy and focus to those families
295 who find care hard to access (Fernandez Turienzo et al., 2021); experience high levels of social
296 complexity, inequality, and deprivation (Khan et al., 2023); may have a rooted distrust for the NHS
297 and wider social care systems (Silverio, Varman, et al., 2023); or are generally underserved by the
298 health and care system (Pilav, De Backer, et al., 2022). In doing so, we must integrate psychological
299 support across the healthcare systems linked to maternal and child health, especially for families who
300 experience pregnancy losses (George-Carey et al., 2024), those whose babies are born premature or
301 become ill (Worrall et al., 2023), or whose babies die (Silverio, Easter, et al., 2021; deMontigny et al.,
302 2023); as these parents and families require additional psychological support as they access other parts
303 of the healthcare system such as Neonatal Intensive Care Units [NICU; Silverio, Easter, et al., 2021]
304 or perinatal bereavement care services (Silverio, Memtsa et al., 2022).
305

306 **4.2.2 Parity of Esteem in Mental and Physical Healthcare with an Emphasis on Specialist**

307 **Perinatal Services**

308 Protecting healthcare professionals' emotional well-being and capacity, protecting against
309 redeployment, and arguing for greater representation of minoritized staff, is recommended across
310 perinatal mental health services (Bridle et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2021), echoing broader calls across
311 all maternity and children's healthcare services (Silverio et al., 2022). Better integration of physical
312 and mental health care is also required (House of Commons, 2023), whilst retaining and improving
313 specialist perinatal mental health services (Howard & Khalifeh, 2020). Community, educative, and
314 public health engagement needs targeting to better support marginalised and disadvantaged
315 communities suffering with perinatal mental health problems (Hildersley et al., 2022; Pilav, Easter, et
316 al., 2022). New and evolving information about the potential negative effects on perinatal mental
317 health, transmitted from leading experts should be concise, credible, and transparent (Jackson et al.,
318 2021; 2023).

320 **4.2.3 Horizon Scanning for Perinatal Mental Health Research, Policy, & Practice**

321 Perinatal mental health research covers a broad expanse of time (preconception to postpartum), engages
322 women and their families, and involves many aspects of the healthcare system. The ability to mobilise
323 research using innovative methods and having prompt access to accurate, identifiable routine data is
324 imperative for rapid-response research. The effects of the pandemic on mental health during
325 preconception (Balachandren et al., 2022), after an early elective abortion or termination of pregnancy
326 due to foetal anomaly, or following an early pregnancy loss or late perinatal death (Loughnan et al.,

327 2022; Silverio, Easter et al., 2021), are yet to be fully understood and should remain areas of priority.
328 Global data may also be useful to understanding best practice in aspects of perinatal mental health care
329 which could be applied to the UK NHS context.

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331 **5 Conclusion**

332 Postpartum distress was elevated during mandated social distancing restrictions (Fallon et al., 2021;
333 Mateus et al., 2022). Qualitative and critical review literature contextualised these findings.
334 Specifically, perinatal women struggled to navigate scaled-back maternity care and felt their
335 experience of maternity had been overshadowed by uncertainties and health anxiety pertaining to the
336 COVID-19 pandemic (Bridle et al., 2022; Jackson et al., 2021; 2023; Montgomery et al., 2023; Pilav,
337 Easter, et al., 2022). For families facing additional adversities (e.g., those experiencing domestic abuse
338 and violence), the depletion of face-to-face care proved a particularly grievous threat to wellbeing
339 (Hildersley et al., 2022). Finally, The Postpartum Specific Anxiety Scale – Research Short Form was
340 produced and validated in English for use in global crises (Silverio et al., 2021), allowing for a rapid
341 assessment of postpartum anxiety in future global health crises.

342 Recommendations for immediate action were suggested under aspects of care to retain,
343 reintroduce, and to remove. Protecting access to essential reproductive and perinatal health services
344 (Baxter et al., 2023; Romanis & Parsons, 2020), ensuring quality healthcare delivery (Bridle et al.,
345 2022; Montgomery et al., 2023; Pilav, Easter, et al., 2022), and giving perinatal mental health parity
346 of esteem with physical health concerns (House of Commons, 2023) as well as providing specialist,
347 tailored services for perinatal women (Alderdice, 2020; Howard & Khalifeh, 2020; Department of
348 Health & Social Care, 2022) is recommended for retention as we recover and re-build services after
349 the pandemic. Remote care should be retained (Pilav, Easter, et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2021), but not
350 at the expense of face-to-face consultation (Hildersley et al., 2022; Jackson et al., 2021; 2023), and nor
351 should it be the dominant provision. Partners and family members, who women and birthing people
352 want to be present should be prioritised in healthcare settings (Bridle et al., 2022; Montgomery et al.,
353 2023). Reinstating trust in the professional judgement of healthcare staff (Wilson et al., 2021), ensuring
354 adequate and timely communication between central NHS management, individual Trusts, and
355 healthcare professionals (Bridle et al., 2022), and protecting staff from unnecessary re-deployment
356 (Bridle et al., 2022; Montgomery et al., 2023), are recommended for reinstation; whilst recognizing the
357 importance of social care being able to visit families rather than offering remote assessments and
358 follow-up. Blanket policies made without considering demographic and accessibility variation should
359 be ceased (Greenfield, 2022; Pilav, Easter, et al., 2022; Silverio, Easter, et al., 2021). Efforts should

360 be made to investigate the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, birthing people,
361 and their families.

362 It is envisioned that this statement will provide the foundation for future research, policy
363 implications, and service provision and care practices in perinatal mental health as we emerge from the
364 pandemic, recover our healthcare systems and services, and build back a better provision for perinatal
365 mental health care in the future. The services of the future must be resilient, adaptable, tensile, and
366 plastic enough to weather future health system shocks when they inevitably arise – in order to provide
367 the safest, most up-to-date, and best possible perinatal mental health care in the future.

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In review

393 **6 Conflict of Interest**

394 Sergio A. Silverio (King’s College London) is in receipt of a Personal Doctoral Fellowship from the
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402 International Stillbirth Alliance) is a Trustee for Mothers for Mothers, a perinatal mental health charity.
403 Victoria Fallon (University of Liverpool) and Kayleigh S. Sheen (University of the West of England
404 Bristol) are currently serving Society for Reproductive & Infant Psychology committee members, with
405 Victoria Fallon being a core officer (Treasurer) and Kayleigh S. Sheen being the Communications
406 Officer and one of the co-ordinators for the Research Development Workshop Grant scheme.

407

408 **7 Author Contributions**

409 Conceptualisation: [SAS]; Methodology: [SAS, LJ, MG]; Validation: [SAS, MG]; Formal Analysis:
410 [SAS, LJ]; Investigation: [LJ, MG, KB, JMH, MN, MO, CS, SMD, KDB, FEK-N, SP, SW, LB, NK,
411 DR, LEC, LDP, VF, EM, CAW, JAH, LMH, JS, LAM, KSS, SAS]; Resources: [SAS, MG]; Data
412 Curation: [LJ, SAS]; Writing – Original Draft: [LJ, SAS]; Writing – Review & Editing: [MG, EP, KB,
413 JMH, MN, MO, CS, SMD, KDB, FEK-N, SP, SW, LB, NK, DR, LEC, LDP, VF, EM, CAW, JAH,
414 LMH, JS, LAM, KSS]; Visualization: [LJ, SAS]; Supervision: [SAS]; Project Administration: [SAS,
415 EP]; Funding acquisition: [SAS, VF, MG, KDB, LEC, SP, SMD, LJ, DR, NK, JMH, CAW, LDP, EM,
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417

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422

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432

433 **10 Data Availability Statement**

434 Not applicable.

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