



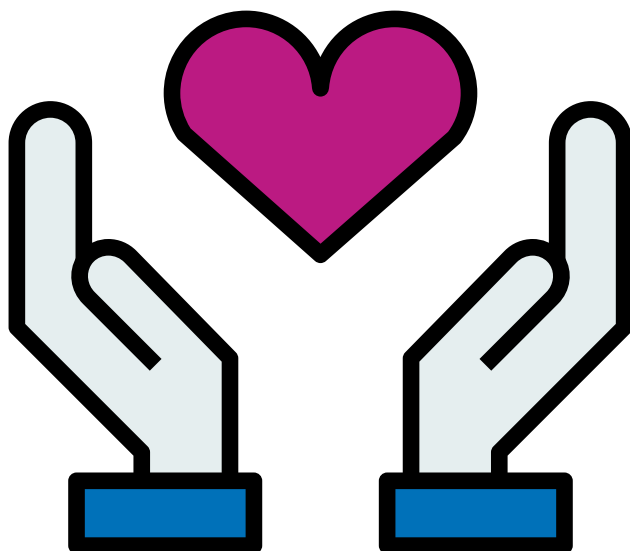
Paths

Support for birth
trauma or baby loss

West Yorkshire
Health and Care Partnership



NHS



Reproductive trauma for dads, parents and non-birthing parents

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Other leaflets you may find useful include:

Dads and partner information; general mental health and parenting
Dads and non-birthing parents; fear of birth

New parents

In the first few weeks after having a baby you and or your partner may feel upset at the thought of the birth or care experience.

You may experience unusual feelings like being upset, scared or angry when you talk or think about it.

You might have images or thoughts about the birth when not trying to think about it

This can be quite normal as your mind adjusts after a stressful experience.

These feelings usually fade or resolve by 4-6 weeks.

Talking about your birth experience can be helpful. You may find this is enough to help you make sense of it.

If you find that your feelings about the birth or care are too much, let your health professional know.





It is important to look after yourself and your partner in the early weeks after birth as well as caring for your new baby.



For most people unwanted feelings will settle, and you will naturally recover.



Some people will go on to need more help to get over the symptoms if they last longer than 4 weeks or more.



With the right help and support you will start to feel better. Remember you will not always feel like this, it is a temporary state.



Our service can offer support that will help the birthing parents make sense of the care, birth or experience.



We can offer therapies to help you to heal and can signpost dads and non-birthing parents to similar relevant services.

After a tough experience, especially with a new baby to care for, routines and energy for simple tasks can feel overwhelming.

You might want to hide away, avoid talking about it, or give up on the things you might enjoy with your baby. The shock of your experience can make it difficult to care for your baby.

It's normal to feel this way to start with, thinking that the trauma has permanently changed things or taken away precious moments with your baby. But isolating yourself and giving up can make you feel even more upset and alone.

On top of that you are supporting your partner and dealing with other people's expectations. You are not alone in this and everyone has their own personal experience. Only you can determine if something was traumatic for you.

Is it not just birth that can cause trauma. Other aspects of care can make you vulnerable to symptoms of trauma.

Self-help tips

Stay connected with people you care about and trust.

Talk to them about your experiences and feelings. They can offer practical support, or simply listen and help you feel calm and cared for.

Support your partner to heal physically helping with the basics like eating regularly, resting, showering, and light exercise. It's okay to also feel tired and overwhelmed.

Try peer support - connecting with others who've had similar experiences can be beneficial.

Talking to other dads and non-birthing partners or writing in a journal can also be helpful to express your feelings.

Understanding trauma: How may it affect me

When something bad happens, it can leave lasting effects on how we feel and think. This is called trauma. It can be useful to understand why you are feeling this way.

Trauma can happen to anyone, and it's okay to feel overwhelmed. Some common reactions to trauma that you might experience include:



Intrusive memories: You may have memories of the event that keep coming back, even when you don't want them to. It might feel like you're reliving the moment, or you could have scary dreams about it.



Avoidance: Sometimes, you might want to avoid things that remind you of the trauma. It could be certain activities, places, or even people. That's a natural response to protect yourself.



Negative changes in mood and thinking: Trauma can make you feel really sad or angry. You might blame yourself or have negative thoughts about yourself and the world around you.



Hyperarousal: Feeling on edge all the time is normal after trauma. You might get easily startled or feel irritated. It could also make it hard for you to sleep or concentrate.



Emotional distress: Trauma can bring up intense emotions like sadness, anger, or guilt. On the other hand, you might feel emotionally numb and not feel much at all.

Remember, everyone is different, and not everyone will experience all of these reactions. It's essential to understand that these symptoms can vary in strength, and it's okay to seek support if you need it.

You don't have to go through it alone.

Reach out to someone you trust or a professional who can help you cope and heal. You deserve support and care during difficult times.

Intrusive memories and thoughts

After a traumatic experience, our brains get busy trying to respond to the threat, making it hard to process what's happening.

As a result, memories of the trauma may feel different from other non-traumatic memories. They can be very real and keep popping up when we don't want them to.

To make these memories feel more like others, our brains need to piece together all the different parts of the experience, like what we saw, heard, smelled, and felt.

It's like assembling parts of a machine or jigsaw. During this process, parts of the experience may suddenly come into our minds without warning. Though not pleasant, this is a normal way our brain helps us work through the memory.

Eventually, these memories can be stored with our other past memories, helping us heal and cope better.

How can I manage these thoughts?



If we try to avoid or stop these memories, they will keep coming back or cause emotional issues later. Instead, a better way to deal with intrusive memories is to step back and watch them without trying to control them.



You can try labelling the memories as "just part of the memory again" or imagine them as something outside of yourself, like leaves floating on a stream or clouds in the sky.



You might also find it helpful to focus on things that remind you the trauma is over and people are safe now. By doing this, you can learn to cope with these memories in a healthier way.

Rebuilding your life is crucial for healing after trauma. Remember what you used to enjoy and what made you feel good. Think about your plans with your baby. If some activities are not possible right now, find alternatives.

With time and this kind of support most people overcome the feelings of trauma while other may need further support.

What are the benefits of getting support?

- Reduction in symptoms.
- Individualised care and support.
- Improved emotional wellbeing for you and your baby.
- Support if bonding with your baby is becoming an issue.
- More confidence in your abilities.
- Less need for medication.
- Longer term improvement in mental health.

In addition, dads and partners have many positive effects on their partner's wellbeing. Supportive partners can lead to a reduction in maternal depressive symptoms, an increase in breastfeeding rates, and improved engagement with services.

In order for these advantages to be realised, it's important for partners to stay healthy and well themselves. That's why it's really important for you to get the support you need.

Getting support for trauma

Paths – support for birth trauma

Paths can offer a sensitive conversation and therapy services for women and birthing people experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of trauma if they have not faded or stopped on their own after 3 months.

This can be at a place that feels safe for you and we can be flexible. Our service has translation facilities and provide outreach or virtual appointments.

Our specially trained midwives and psychological therapists can provide information and understanding about your care and help to process and begin to heal from your experiences.

You can ask your health professional to help you access the service.

www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/services/paths/

Support for dads and non-birthing parents

NHS Talking Therapies

Talking Therapies offer support with mild to moderate mental health needs to help with difficult thoughts and feelings. Therapies like trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy (tfCBT) or eye movement desensitization therapy (EMDR) can be effective in helping people with PTSD. They can make sense of what happened, put memories in the past, and allow you to enjoy life with your baby. You can self-refer online.

Women, dads, partners and non-birthing parents can self-refer to talking therapies. You will be prioritised if your partner is pregnant or you have a child under 1 year.

Turning Point Talking Therapies Wakefield and Pontefract	01924 234860 www.turning-point.co.uk/get-support
Kirklees Talking Therapies	www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/services/kirklees-talking-therapies/
Calderdale Talking Therapies	www.calderdale-talkingtherapies.nhs.uk
Leeds Talking Therapies	www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-a-z/leeds-mental-wellbeing-service/what-we-offer/
Bradford and Airedale Talking Therapies	www.bdctalkingtherapies.nhs.uk

Medication from GP

Medication is not the first choice for PTSD, but it can be helpful for some alongside other support, especially if your mood is very low. Talk to your GP to learn more about medication options.

Websites

Andy's Man Club

Free to attend peer-to-peer support groups across the United Kingdom and online.

<https://andysmanclub.co.uk/>

Mind - Dads need support too

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/your-stories/dads-need-support-too/>

Dad Matters UK

Support and signposting for dads worried about or suffering from depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

<https://dadmatters.org.uk/get-in-touch/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/dadmattersuk> - Private dads support group

www.aimh.uk/news-resources/resources/ – parenting resources

www.dad.info

www.thedadpad.co.uk – guidance and advice for a new parent from practical skills and cares to getting help with emotional health.

Download the app for free:  Dad Pad®

www.relate.org.uk – relationship advice and support, including online chat and leaflets.

Citizen's Advice

Find out what your rights are at work including shared parental leave.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/maternity-and-parental-rights/check-your-maternity-and-parental-rights/>

www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/baby-buddy - an interactive app to support parents.



Download the free app:

The Birth Trauma Association

Stories and support for birth trauma.

<https://www.birthtraumaassociation.org/>

Thank you to Dad Matters UK and Matthew Elliott, Dad Matters co-ordinator, for their input and collaboration in providing this information.

If you require a copy of this information in any other format or language please contact the Trust.

إذا كنت تحتاج إلى نسخة من هذه المعلومات بأي تنسيق أو لغة أخرى، فيرجى الاتصال بـ Trust. (Arabic)

اگر شما به یک نسخه از این اطلاعات در هر قالب (فرمت) یا زبان دیگری نیاز دارید، لطفاً با بنیاد (Trust) تماس بگیرید. (Farsi)

Ha a jelen információk másolatát más formátumban vagy nyelven szeretné megkapni, akkor kérjük, hogy lépjen kapcsolatba a trösztel. (Hungarian)

ئه‌گه‌ر پ‌وونووسی ئه‌م زانیاریانه‌ت به‌ هه‌ر زمان یان فۆرماتیکی دیکه‌ پ‌یویسته‌ تکایه‌ له‌گه‌ڵ ئیمه‌ پ‌یۆه‌ندی بگه‌ره‌. (Kurdish Sorani)

Jeśli potrzebują Państwo uzyskać kopię niniejszej informacji w innym formacie lub języku, prosimy o kontakt z Funduszem Zdrowia. (Polish)

Se necessitar de uma cópia destas informações em qualquer outro formato ou idioma, entre em contato com a Fundação. (Portuguese)

جے تہانوں ایس جانکاری دی اک کاپی دی کسے ہور فارمیٹ یا بولی وچ لوڑ اے تے مہربانی کر کے ٹرسٹ نال رابطہ کرو۔ (Punjabi Pakistani)

Dacă aveți nevoie de o copie a acestor informații în orice alt format sau limbă, vă rugăm să contactați Trustul nostru. (Romanian)

اگر آپ کو اس معلومات کی ایک کاپی کی کسی دوسرے فارمیٹ یا زبان میں ضرورت ہو تو براہ مہربانی ٹرسٹ سے رابطہ کریں۔ (Urdu)