



Synopsis

Accessibility and acceptability of perinatal mental health services for women from ethnic minority groups: a synopsis of the PAAM study

Nikolina Jovanović,^{1,2*} Maev Conneely,^{2,3} Sarah Bicknell⁴ and Jelena Janković⁴

¹Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health, Wolfson Institute of Population Health, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

²East London NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

³Unit for Social and Community Psychiatry (WHO Collaborating Centre for Mental Health Service Development), Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

⁴Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Birmingham, UK

*Corresponding author n.jovanovic@qmul.ac.uk

Published October 2025
DOI: 10.3310/TDAS1298

Plain language summary

Accessibility and acceptability of perinatal mental health services for women from ethnic minority groups: a synopsis of the PAAM study

Health and Social Care Delivery Research 2025; Vol. 13: No. 36
DOI: 10.3310/TDAS1298

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain language summary

Why did we do this study?

In the United Kingdom, people from ethnic minority groups are more likely to experience mental health problems during pregnancy and after having a baby. However, they are less likely to access help from services. This unfairness is why we did this study.

What did we do?

We explored how people from different ethnic backgrounds in England use mental health services. We studied patient records to understand the journey to perinatal mental health services in Birmingham, London and Nottingham. We also spoke with women, families and clinicians about their experiences. This research was conducted from 2018 to 2023.

What did we find?

Ethnicity affects how people access care. Black African, Asian and White other women used community mental health services less often than White British women and were more likely to be admitted to hospital against their will. Asian women had more emergency admissions to Mother and Baby Units. Black patients were less likely than White British patients to use multiple services before being admitted to a Mother and Baby Unit. The study also found that where women lived had a bigger impact on their experiences of care than their clinical or personal circumstances. Asian and Black women, their partners and family members and their clinicians shared what gets in the way of getting help. This includes stigma, fear of having their children taken away and the confusing way services are set up.

What does this mean for service users and their families?

People need clear information about available support, how to access it and what seeking help means for their future with their child.

What does this mean for policy-makers, clinicians and commissioners?

Stakeholders should focus on raising awareness of services, tracking service use across ethnic groups, addressing stigma and fears of child removal.

Health and Social Care Delivery Research

ISSN 2755-0079 (Online)

A list of Journals Library editors can be found on the [NIHR Journals Library website](#)

Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HSDR) was launched in 2013 and is indexed by Europe PMC, DOAJ, INAHTA, Ulrichsweb™ (ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor, MI, USA), NCBI Bookshelf, Scopus and MEDLINE.

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

This journal was previously published as *Health Services and Delivery Research* (Volumes 1–9); ISSN 2050-4349 (print), ISSN 2050-4357 (online)

The full HSDR archive is freely available to view online at www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/hsdr.

Criteria for inclusion in the *Health and Social Care Delivery Research* journal

Manuscripts are published in *Health and Social Care Delivery Research* (HSDR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HSDR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

HSDR programme

The HSDR programme funds research to produce evidence to impact on the quality, accessibility and organisation of health and social care services. This includes evaluations of how the NHS and social care might improve delivery of services.

For more information about the HSDR programme please visit the website at <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/health-and-social-care-delivery-research.htm>

This article

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HSDR programme or one of its preceding programmes as award number 17/105/14. The contractual start date was in May 2019. The draft manuscript began editorial review in October 2023 and was accepted for publication in March 2025. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HSDR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' manuscript and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this article.

This article presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, the HSDR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, the HSDR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

This article was published based on current knowledge at the time and date of publication. NIHR is committed to being inclusive and will continually monitor best practice and guidance in relation to terminology and language to ensure that we remain relevant to our stakeholders.

Copyright © 2025 Jovanović *et al.* This work was produced by Jovanović *et al.* under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This is an Open Access publication distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0 licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, reproduction and adaptation in any medium and for any purpose provided that it is properly attributed. See: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. For attribution the title, original author(s), the publication source – NIHR Journals Library, and the DOI of the publication must be cited.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Newgen Digitalworks Pvt Ltd, Chennai, India (www.newgen.co).