



OUR IMPACT | **IMPACT REPORT**
2021/2022

A time of exciting growth



I am so proud of the way our amazing staff and volunteers quickly adapted our existing models of support during the pandemic to provide online and telephone support. In this way, we provided a vital lifeline for many isolated and vulnerable new parents. We learnt many lessons from this time and over the last 12 months, we have yet again seen immense change in how we offer support to families.

In September 2021, we began the process of re-opening our three centres and face-to-face services across Birmingham. Drawing on the lessons we learnt from supporting families remotely, we also established a new team of telephone support staff that runs alongside our in-person services. Moving forward, our new mixed model now offers families a variety of flexible ways to access our services as quickly as possible in a way that suits their needs.

The year has also seen Acacia have an impact regionally and nationally. We delivered a national conference and launched six new multi-lingual films, extended our services beyond Birmingham and continued to develop the capacity of our sector across England via the Hearts and Minds Perinatal Mental Health VCS Partnership.

Amidst such change and growth, the heart of who we are remains unshakeable. Our Christian ethos of love, kindness and hope combined with professionalism and lived experience means we are unique. We understand what families are going through and consistently go 'above and beyond' for families. In the year ahead, we look forward to supporting more parents and families and making sure our internal systems and business processes are robust and fit for the future.

Thank you to all those who have engaged, supported and partnered with us over the last year. We hope you can be part of this continuing and exciting journey.

Georgina Dean

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Why we exist

The number of parents referred to Acacia with severe depression and anxiety is growing and has reached its highest ever levels.

Despite this, access to community-based maternal mental health support remains disappointingly inconsistent and patchy. **One in five mothers** will experience a maternal mental health issue and annually approximately **3,000 mothers in Birmingham** will be affected.

The majority of parents will not be eligible for specialist care and are reliant on local community support such as that provided by Acacia.

Worrying inequalities

In some cases, access to support is made much worse due to additional inequalities:

- **Teenage mothers are 40% more likely** to experience pre/postnatal depression but are the least likely to seek help. **24% of our beneficiaries** are young parents.
- Mothers from **Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds** have **five times the risk of dying** in pregnancy or up to six weeks postpartum compared to white women. **37% of our beneficiaries** are from these backgrounds.

Our vision

A world where every family affected by pre or postnatal mental illness receives timely and effective support close to home.

Our mission

To improve the lives of mothers and families affected by pre and postnatal depression and anxiety.

“

“I just want to be able to cope and enjoy looking after my baby.”

Mum using Acacia’s befriending service

“

“This is undoubtedly the toughest period of my life.”

Dad using Acacia’s Dads’ and Partners’ service

Our Christian values and what they mean to us

Acacia is built on a strong Christian foundation. We enable people to flourish by experiencing and responding to the love of God which inspires and challenges us to trust steadily, hope unswervingly and love unconditionally. We place equal value on every individual; welcoming people of all faiths and of none. We aim to create supportive, inclusive and energising communities where parents and families can belong, be valued, contribute and thrive.

61% of volunteers and 92% of staff have their own lived experience of perinatal mental health or other mental health issues

The way we work

Acacia Family Support is a Christian charity, which for nearly two decades has been offering specialist support for families living with pre and postnatal depression and anxiety across Birmingham. Services are based on a model of lived-experience and peer support with a central ethos of ‘love and kindness’.

About this report

This report explores the impact of both our work with families and our wider work supporting the sector nationally.

It draws on an external evaluation and analysis of our impact data undertaken in August 2022 by Dr Nahid Ahmad, an independent research consultant and chartered psychologist.

The mental health outcomes data in this report comes from two clinical measures of depression and anxiety – the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 questionnaires. These are the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) recommended tools for measuring these conditions (IAPT manual, 2019), and are also amongst the tools recommended by NICE (NICE, 2011b; NICE, 2012; NICE, 2014).

During the year, 211 mothers completed these 'before' and 'after' clinical measures. Data is also taken from 296 mothers who received telephone support and responded to an evaluation questionnaire at the end of the phone call.



Who accessed our support?



19%

of mums entered with severe depression*

54%

of mums entered with severe anxiety*

633

families accessed our support

53%

were self-referrals, the most common route

42%

of referrals came from health professionals

The number of service-users referred with severe mental health conditions is growing and has reached its highest ever levels



39%

of mums were from minority ethnic backgrounds

29

was the average age of mums entering the service

28%

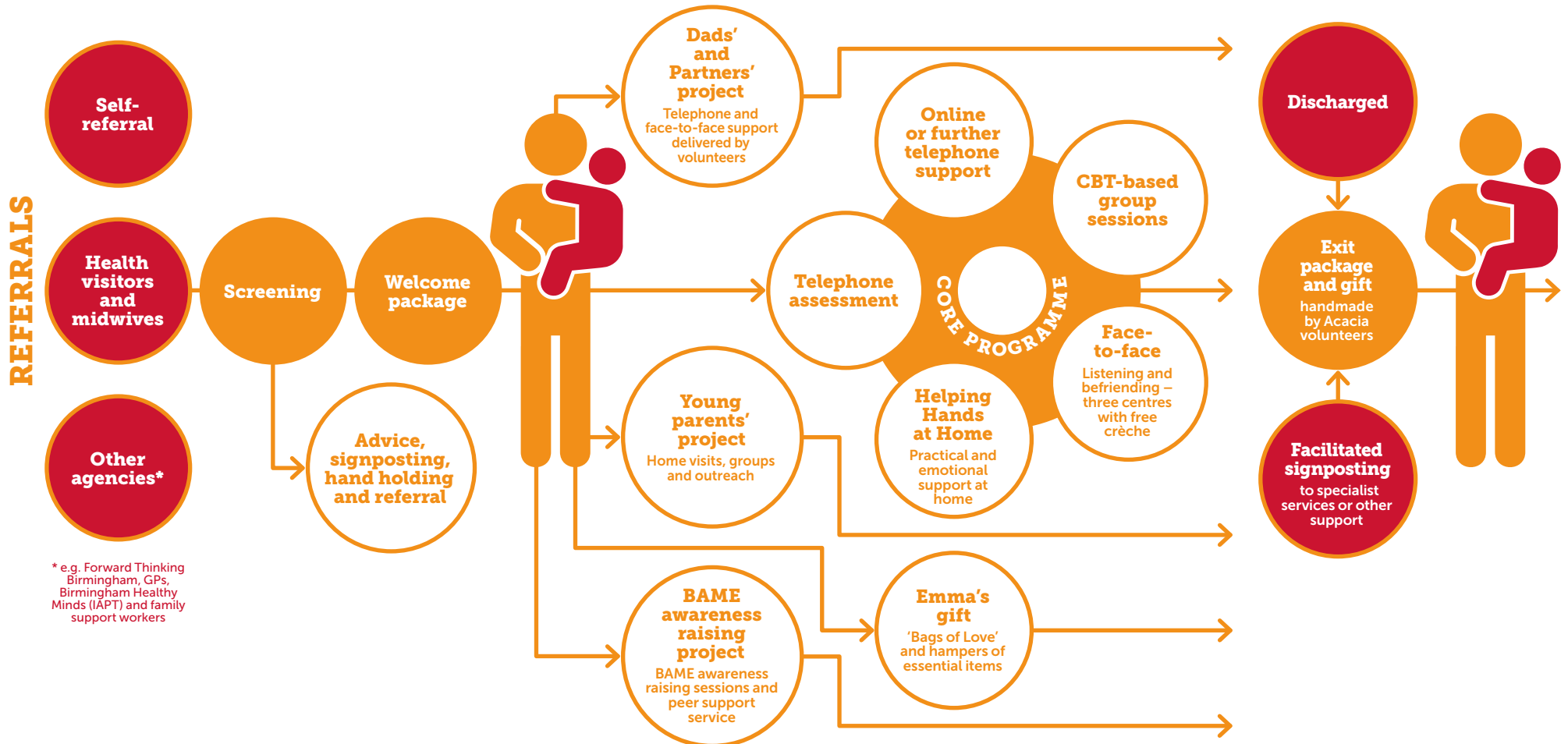
of mums were 25 or under



*Based on 2 IAPT and NICE recommended clinical tools for measuring depression and anxiety: PHQ-9 and GAD-7 questionnaires

How we helped

Our support journey



Our impact

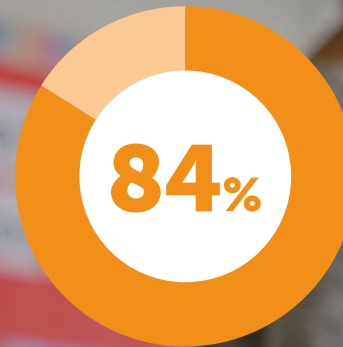
“

“I opened the post and it was a card from Acacia and I just cried as I thought it was ... such a beautiful touch.

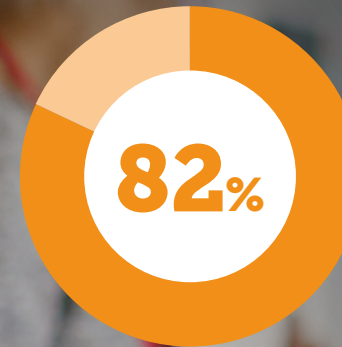
Thank you so much to everyone at Acacia, I know my journey is only just beginning ... but I just wanted to say a thank you for bringing happiness and a sense of feeling that everything will be OK with something so sweet and small with a card.”

“

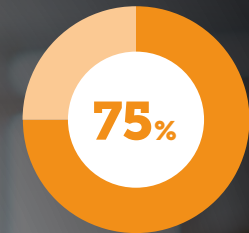
“My befriender listened and really understood where I was coming from and went above and beyond to help me feel safe and reassured. I always received such a warm welcome from yourself and all of the team at Crossway. The little touches really made a big difference.”



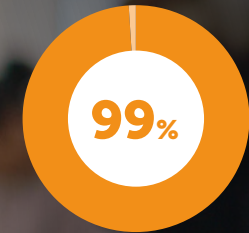
of women had reduced depression



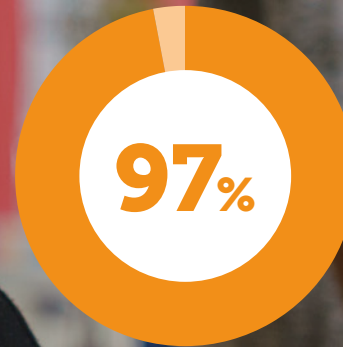
had reduced anxiety



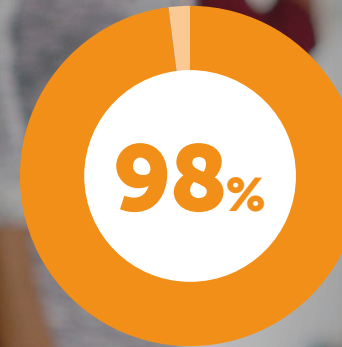
had reduced depression and anxiety



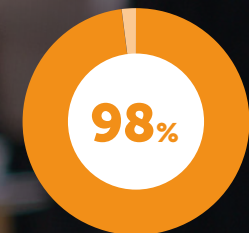
felt more supported



felt more optimistic and hopeful



felt better able to cope



would recommend Acacia to friends and family

7½ months was the average length of service

53% of client contact was via telephone

353 gifts and care packages were delivered



rated Acacia's services as good, very good or excellent

Reaching further

Our wider impact

Acacia's impact extends beyond Birmingham and our grassroots service delivery. We believe all families should have access to the help they deserve. During the year we have delivered the following projects that 'go further' and reach parents who are most in need of support but are least likely to find help.

Raising awareness and supporting parents from minority ethnic communities

This year we launched six new multilingual films – Punjabi, Mirpuri, Dari, Gujarati, Slovakian and Urdu – aiming to raise awareness of perinatal mental health issues in a culturally appropriate way. The films are distributed via social media and are freely available for communities and services throughout the UK.

We employ an NHS funded BAME Peer Support worker who offers telephone listening and befriending, home visits, walk and talks, peer-led group work and stay and plays.

We became a founding partner in Birmingham's Parent and Carer Race and Equality Framework (PCREF). Birmingham is one of NHS England's three pilot sites for the implementation of the PCREF initiative across the country.



We have delivered over five cultural awareness training workshops for specialist perinatal mental health teams.

We provide free interpretation services for any referrals who struggle with the English language and for whom English isn't their first language.

Supporting dads and partners

During the year, we employed a full time Dads' and Partners' Worker and developed free and comprehensive online and printed resources which are tailored to the diverse needs. We have also developed resources aimed at LGBTQ+ families.

Beyond Birmingham: Acacia in Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes

During the year, we have continued to run a new project to support young people, BAME communities and dads/partners across this area.



Hearts & Minds Partnership

As a well-established leader in the field of third sector perinatal mental health care, Acacia believes that good quality, local, grassroots perinatal mental health services should be available to everyone.

Working alongside Bluebell (Bristol and South West) and Smile (North West), our national partnership of grassroots perinatal mental health VCS organisations goes from strength to strength.

Highlights include:

- 70 local services are now featured on our online digital map of safe, good quality grassroots services across England
- 63 VCS organisations have taken part in our monthly Conversation Space online meet ups
- We are working hard to develop our online training programme for new and emerging VCS organisations to be launched by the end of 2022.



Hearts&Minds

www.heartsandmindspartnership.org



Looking after our incredible team of staff and volunteers

Acacia's services are delivered by an inspiring and dedicated team of 32 staff and over 50 regular volunteers. We want Acacia Family Support to be an aspirational place to work or volunteer. We believe in going the extra mile for our families and our workforce.

During the year, we have:

- Championed family friendly and flexible working practices
- Listened and engaged with staff via staff surveys, strategy days and all staff team meetings
- Pledged to continue as a certified Living Wage Employer ensuring all staff are paid an hourly rate based on the realistic cost of living
- Undertaken a pay, salary structure and salary benchmarking review across the organisation
- Significantly increased the level of clinical supervision and availability of external free counselling support
- Hosted a weekly online 'breakfast social' to reduce staff isolation for remote workers
- Invested heavily in back-office functions by recruiting five new fundraising, payroll, HR, admin and management support roles
- Gift day at Christmas as an extra day's annual leave
- Completed our 2022-2024 Strategic Business Plan – key themes are restoration and reflection.

“

Acacia is such a flexible employer.”

“

The team spirit is incredible.”

Our staff survey found that...

100%

of staff were either satisfied or very satisfied working for Acacia

100%

of staff were either satisfied or very satisfied with the workplace culture at Acacia

96%

of the staff surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with their terms and conditions of employment

96%

felt that Acacia looked after the emotional wellbeing of staff either a great deal or a lot

88%

of the staff have lived experience of perinatal mental health problems and/or another mental health condition



Volunteers are the heart of our service

As we emerge from Covid, we have felt a strong sense of family, community and connection amongst our volunteers. They care and support and encourage each other, which inspires us daily. We cannot thank them enough.

Our volunteer survey results...

93%

said that their skills had increased

90%

felt that they were making a useful contribution to society

84%

felt a greater sense of community

27%

have helped Acacia for 6-10 years

We asked volunteers what they enjoyed most about working with Acacia. The main themes that emerged were:



Making a difference and helping



A sense of belonging to a family, a team



Feeling valued and supported

“

“After Acacia, I went onto study social work at university. This role was key in securing my place and I am currently employed as a social worker and working with people with mental health difficulties everyday.”

“

“Volunteering as a befriender helped me to have the confidence to go to university as a mature student and then get a job in mental health. None of this would have been possible without Acacia.”

How we support and thank our volunteers...



**Annual
volunteer
appreciation
event and meal**



**Annual
volunteer
survey**



**Individual
yearly
catch up**



**Volunteers
week,
1-7 June,
with a personal
note of
thanks**



**A gift on
volunteers'
birthdays**



**Ongoing
training and
development**



**Christmas
parties and
thank you gift**



**Termly social
catch-ups**

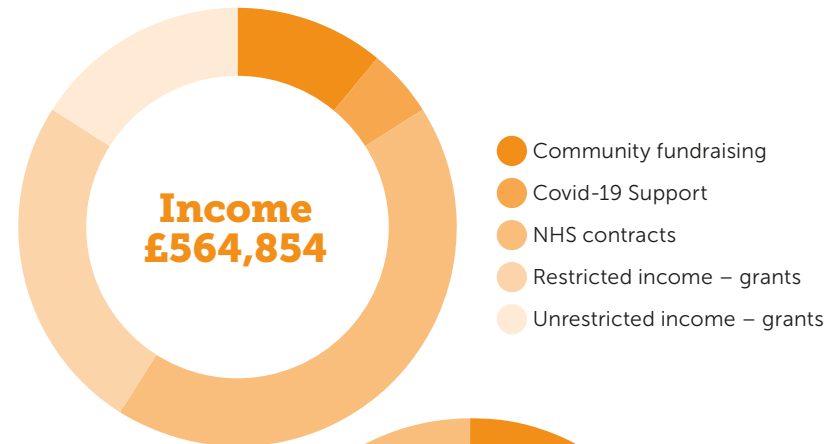
Investing in our future and a more flexible model of support

2021 and 2022 has been a period of huge learning and growth at Acacia. The lessons we learnt from offering online and telephone support during Covid suggest that we can and should offer families better flexibility when accessing our support.

We have also invested in important back-office business systems and staff that will help us perform better and be a healthy, resilient charity fit for the future.

Our growth in 2021/22:

- Developed a new team of three Telephone Support Practitioners
- Recruited a full-time Dads and Partners Peer Support Worker
- Recruited a Young Parents Group Work Practitioner
- Invested in five new staff roles across community fundraising, payroll/HR, management support and senior administration.



We couldn't do it without you

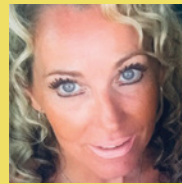


Every year, we are grateful to hundreds of different people for helping us work towards achieving our mission. From the smallest gesture to a large donation, we give equal thanks and heartfelt gratitude to every one of you. Some special thanks throughout the year goes to...

Our brave team of 16 who took to the skies and faced their fears for Acacia! This awesome group took part in our skydiving challenge helping to raise a whopping £11,345! A huge thank you to all our participants, including two businesses; Lexicomm and M3 Agency, who signed up to support our charity and help to raise vital funds.

Taking part in the Virtual London Marathon is an enormous challenge which is not for the light-hearted, but on 3 October 2021, our amazing team of 10 took to the streets and walked a whopping 26 miles to raise money for Acacia! Their efforts helped to raise £7,367, which will help to fund many more families to access the essential support they need from Acacia.

Rachel Gregory – Acacia Co-founder and Trustee



During the year, Acacia's Co-founder stepped down as a Trustee of the charity. Rachel Gregory and Emma Borg founded Acacia together in 2003 and Rachel worked passionately and tirelessly to help the Charity grow into the amazing organisation that we are today. Working on the leadership team for 10 years as Head of Operations, Rachel continued to serve as a Trustee whilst training and working as a specialist perinatal mental health and infant mental health clinician in Birmingham's statutory mental health services. She also worked in national roles for the Maternal Mental Health Alliance and Mental Health Foundation. Words cannot express the love and eternal gratitude we have for Rachel. Her Christian values and unwavering passion for ensuring families get the right support they need continues to inspire us daily. Thank you Rachel for everything.

Our brilliant Trustee team



Hayley Bowen
Data Protection Manager,
Zurich Insurance



Georgina Dean
Chief Financial Officer,
Black Country Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



David Knott
People Change Lead, Ministry
of Justice and Director –
ResourceRight HR Ltd



David Spooner
Consultant
Oncologist



A huge thank you to all of our funding partners

Thanks go to all the Trusts and Foundations and NHS teams who have supported us through the financial year. We are hugely grateful for the support we continue to receive from so many. We couldn't do it without you. Thank you.



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www.acacia.org.uk

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