



OUR IMPACT

IMPACT
REPORT
2022-23



Holly

How I felt before Acacia's help

I felt hopeless and depressed. I was filled with sadness and felt overwhelmed by life. I was terrified that I was a bad mum, or that something was going to happen to my baby. I felt traumatised by my birthing experience and was struggling to process it.

My experience of Acacia's service

I was nervous at first, worried about being judged. What I received was the exact opposite – absolute acceptance and support. The warmth shown, not just for me but for my wife too, was very encouraging. I felt very quickly that Acacia was a safe space for me to explore my feelings and started to realise that I wasn't alone in how I was feeling.

How I'm feeling now

I feel like I believe in my abilities as a mum and realise that I always was the mum I wanted to be, but I just couldn't see it through the fog of postnatal depression. I feel more confident and have met some wonderful people who have become friends and pillars of support.

My hopes for the future

I hope to continue to remain emotionally and mentally well and to be the best mum I can be. Acacia genuinely saved me and I will be forever grateful for the love and support shown to me and my family.

“

“Acacia genuinely saved me and I will be forever grateful for the love and support shown to me and my family.”

Holly



Above: Holly (left) and Becks with their son / Cover page: Bav (left) and Neel with their two sons

Looking back over 20 years and looking forward to an exciting future.



As we prepare to celebrate 20 years of Acacia in 2023/24, it feels important to pause and reflect not only on what we have achieved so far, but what our future looks like. Understanding why we do what we do and how we can help more parents with maternal mental health issues remain key questions that must be held close as we look towards the next 20 years.

The past year has felt both exciting and transitional. On the one hand, it has been yet another year of growth and change in our service delivery, as we have extended our offer of support to more mums and dads from minority ethnic communities across the city. On the other hand, we have been working hard behind the scenes to ensure that we have the right levels of support staff and back-office systems to cope with our rapid growth over the past five years, but also to ensure we are fit for the future and another 20 years. We have invested in

our volunteer training programme, our HR systems, our administration support, our cyber security and our safeguarding team. Although this growth is less visible, they are all vitally important for our future sustainability and success.

As we look towards our future, the heart of who we are remains unshakeable. Our Christian ethos of love, kindness and hope combined with professionalism and lived experience means we understand what families are going through and consistently go the extra mile for parents so desperately in need of support.

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

Georgina Dean
Chair of the Board of Trustees

3

Why we exist

Nationally, suicide is the leading cause of maternal deaths during pregnancy and in the first year after birth. Maternal deaths by suicide have risen three-fold since 2021.

Statutory services are struggling with a 40% increase in demand for perinatal mental health services and 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. Most of these parents will not be eligible for specialist care. Acacia's aim is to address these needs by filling a vital gap in local support.

Delivered by parents who have experienced perinatal mental health issues, our non-judgemental support is underlined by love and care.

“

“I felt so awful when I became a mum that I wasn’t enjoying my baby. I remember crying on my way to Acacia thinking “I’m going to be judged” but of course I wasn’t. I felt immediately supported, understood and validated.”

Mum using our befriending 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.

4

At Acacia, we offer hope to families affected by perinatal mental health issues. Over the past 20 years, the following scripture has helped to guide us:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29 verse 11

Our vision, mission and aims

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.

Our strategic aims

- To provide and promote high quality support services to those affected by pre and postnatal depression and anxiety
- To equip communities with the skills to deliver support services to families
- To raise awareness of pre and postnatal depression and anxiety
- To establish and advance Acacia as the leader in its field.





31

paid staff
(18.8 FTE)

50+

regular
volunteers

88%

have lived-experience
of perinatal/mental
health issues

78%

have lived-experience
of perinatal/mental
health issues

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 2023 by Dr Nahid Ahmad, an independent research consultant and chartered psychologist.

The mental health outcomes data in this report come 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, 192 mothers completed these 'before' and 'after' clinical measures. Data is also taken from 270 mothers who received telephone support and responded to an evaluation questionnaire at the end of the phone call.

Who accessed our support?

567

families accessed
our support

6

Background

The families we support experience higher than average levels of disadvantage and deprivation

39%
of our clients live in the 10% most deprived areas of England

We are extending our reach to mothers from BAME communities

45%
of mums were of BAME origin

Severity

43%
of mums entered with severe anxiety*

12%
of mums entered with severe depression*

Age

19%
of mums were 25 or under

31
years was the average age of mums

34
years was the average age of dads

Referrals

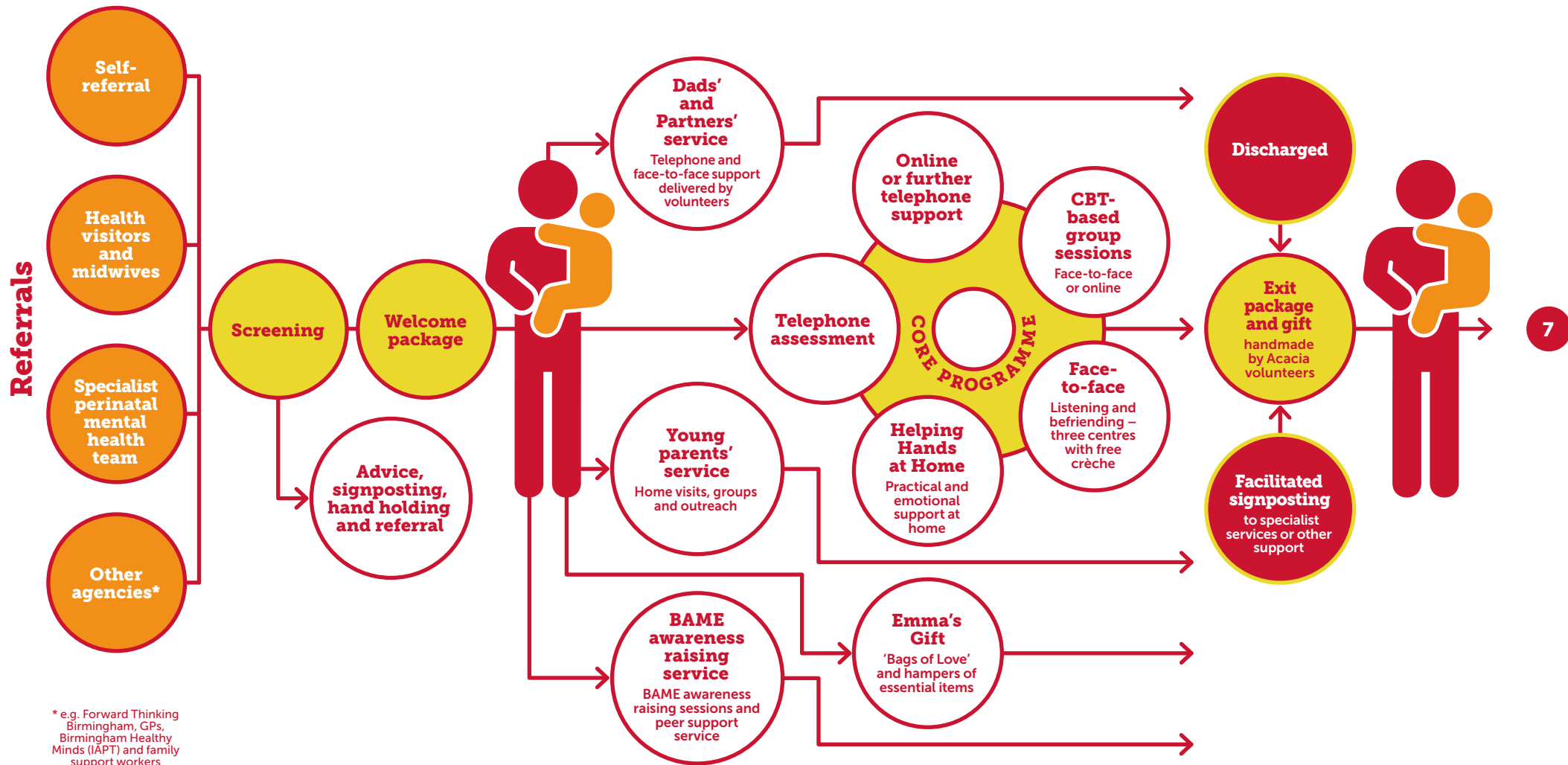
52%
were self-referrals, the most common route into the service

28%
of referrals came from health visitors and midwives

20%
of referrals came from health professionals or other agencies

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

How we help: our support journey



Fiona

How I felt before Acacia's help

I was struggling a lot with my mental health during pregnancy. I was worried about becoming a mother, I feared not being able to bond with my baby. I was scared that my mental health struggles would negatively impact my child in the way my own mother's mental health issues had impacted me. I felt that my husband and baby would be better off without me, that I had more of a negative impact than a positive one.

My experience of Acacia's service

My befriender was always very understanding and sympathetic. She listened without judgement and encouraged me to be more positive in my outlook. She helped me with strategies for positive thinking and retraining my brain to think differently about becoming a mother. After my baby was born, I joined the groupwork. While I was in a better place mentally by then, the sessions helped me to be more aware of my mental state and develop strategies and healthy coping mechanisms, to prevent me from entering negative spirals again.

How I'm feeling now

The future is looking brighter and I no longer feel that I will have a negative impact on my child and family. I feel more able to cope with the challenges of motherhood.

My hopes for the future

I hope to be able to break the cycle of mental health struggles being passed from one generation to the next. I also hope I can teach mentally healthy habits to my child.

“

“The future is looking brighter and I no longer feel that I will have a negative impact on my child and family.”

Fiona



Fiona (right) and Clement

Our impact

Our services significantly improve parents' mental health. We have seen an improvement in recovery rates and beneficiary outcomes in ALL areas compared to the previous year.

8

months was the average length of service

78%

had reduced depression and anxiety

99%

felt more supported

99%

would recommend Acacia to friends and family

100%

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

86%

of women had reduced depression

85%

had reduced anxiety

96%

felt more optimistic and hopeful

99%

felt better able to cope

Supporting professionals

We delivered 18 awareness raising workshops and talks to nearly 300 maternity and perinatal health professionals including...

12

cultural humility workshops

6

awareness raising workshops



Hearts&Minds

During the year we have secured another three years funding to continue the Partnership until 2026

10

The Hearts and Minds Partnership

We believe equitable access to good perinatal mental health support is critical. Working alongside Bluebell (Bristol and the South West) and Smile (North West), our England-wide partnership of grassroots perinatal mental health VCS organisations aims to connect, support and celebrate the VCSE community in perinatal mental health across England.

Over the past three years, the partnership has:

- Hosted a successful National Meet-Up in Jan 2023 with 78 attendees and a panel of national thought leaders from across the PMH landscape which received an average of 9/10 on our event feedback forms
- Developed a website for parents and professionals to access information about the Partnership and perinatal mental health VCSE support, including our England-wide interactive map of services
- Grown a social network of more than 4,500 people who are engaging with our content
- Featured 84 services on our England-wide digital map
- Saw representation from 68 services at 18 Conversation Space sessions – our free, monthly online chats
- Created 'Smart Space' – our free online training resource for emerging and established VCSE groups, with 128 individuals signed up.

Emma's Gift

“

“I think you are all giving out actual love.”

Acacia Family Support was founded in 2003 by two local Birmingham mum and friends, Emma Borg and Rachel Gregory.

In 2018, Emma sadly passed away. To ensure that Emma lives on in our hearts and in the lives of the families we support, the Emma's Gift project was created with the support and blessing of Emma's family.

Emma's Gift is a unique project that is at the heart of our service, offering families love, hope, kindness and compassion. Over the past 12 months Emma's Gift has:

- **Supported 36 families at home** with practical and emotional support such as cleaning, washing, holding the baby and food preparation
- **Delivered 92 'Winter Warmer' hampers** that included an insulated mug, hot chocolate, shortbread biscuits and a hot water bottle
- **Given out over 150 'Bags of Love'** to new parents joining our service (treats and small gifts to help mum, partner and baby)
- **Posted 334 welcome cards** with a tea bag to new referrals and 117 Farewell packages containing a wooden, handmade Acacia Angel and card
- **Supported the emotional wellbeing of staff** by funding 12 hours of external counselling for members of the team in addition to their existing supervision.





Supporting our staff and volunteers

We are a lived-experience charity committed to supporting the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers.

Acacia's services are delivered by an inspiring and dedicated team of 31 staff and over 50 regular volunteers. We are passionate about supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our team and have recently introduced the following initiatives:

- Reduced our FTE working week from 40 to a 37.5 hours
- Hosted an all staff wellbeing away day with a variety of wellbeing workshops and space to relax and connect in beautiful surroundings
- Pledged to continue as a certified Living Wage Employer ensuring all staff are paid an hourly rate based on the realistic cost of living

- Offer staff free external counselling in addition to their existing external supervision
- Championed family friendly and flexible working practices and offered more term time only working options
- Increased the annual leave entitlement, in recognition of length of service and added an extra 'Christmas Gift Day'
- Invested in training and development for staff and managers.

“

“I love the people I work with - all so kind, supportive, dedicated, and a great team.”

Staff member

88%

of staff were either very satisfied or satisfied working for Acacia

84%

of staff feel that Acacia looks after the emotional wellbeing of staff a great deal or a lot

88%

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

96%

of the staff were satisfied or very satisfied with their terms and conditions of employment with flexible working coming out top

Source: 2023 staff survey



“

“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.”

Volunteer

”

“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 every day.”

Volunteer

Our 2023 volunteer survey showed that...

93%

of our volunteers said that their skills had increased

90%

of our volunteers felt that they were making a useful contribution to society

84%

of our volunteers felt a greater sense of community

27%

of our volunteers have helped Acacia for 6-10 years

Annual volunteer appreciation event and meal

Annual volunteer survey

Individual yearly catch up

A gift on volunteer's birthday

Ongoing training and development

Christmas parties and thank you gift

Social catch-ups each term

Volunteers' week 1-7 June with personal note of thanks

Source: 2023 volunteer survey

A year of growth

2022-23 has seen yet another period of huge growth and investment into our service. We have invested in new areas of service development and have ensured that we have the internal systems, processes, people and infrastructure to enable us to be a healthy, resilient and sustainable charity as we look towards the future.



Looking ahead



As we turn our gaze towards the year ahead, we are excited to be celebrating Acacia's 20th birthday.

Starting in October 2023, to coincide with our co-founder Emma Borg's Godly vision for Acacia 20 years ago, we have planned a wonderful year of celebrations including:

- A week of 20th birthday coffee mornings
- A 20th birthday AGM with all former Trustees
- A Mothers' Day celebration service in March 2024
- A big birthday party in spring 2024.

New developments in 2022-23



Local partnerships

We are delighted to have had more local businesses and community groups pledging their support to Acacia over the past year who have nominated us as their 'charity of the year'...



Cudos Creative have supported us with complimentary design time, as well raising vital funds for Acacia by taking part in the London Marathon last October 2022, raising a mega £895!



Meta4 Business Coaching provided a specialist one year coaching programme, to help with raising awareness and generating funds.



Zurich Community Trust will be supporting Acacia over two years with funding and business support including access to training, skill sharing and free office space.



Sutton Coldfield Community Choir chose Acacia as their Charity of the Year and have raised a staggering £9,400 through Christmas Carol Concerts and their monthly quiz!



Moor Hall Primary School staff team took part in our Snowdon at Sunrise challenge raising an enormous £3,500 as well as helping to raise awareness of our charity to school families.

Our brilliant Trustee team



Hayley Bowen
Data Protection Manager,
Zurich Insurance



Hannah Borg
Managing Director and
founder of Cherished Charity



Marie Clare (Dr)
General
Practitioner



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



Acacia Family Support

5a Coleshill Street
Sutton Coldfield
West Midlands
B72 1SD

0121 301 5990

@Acacia_Family

@AcaciaFS

@acaciafamilysupport

www.acacia.org.uk



Acacia is proud to be
an accredited Living
Wage Employer



Published by Acacia Family Support. © Acacia Family Support 2023, all rights reserved.

Acacia Family Support is a registered charity no. 1122831 and a company limited by guarantee no. 6217626.

Design and photography (except page 15): Fovea Creative / www.foveacreative.uk

A huge thank you to our funding partners

Thanks go to all the trusts, foundations and NHS teams who 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.



NHS
Birmingham and Solihull
Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS
Birmingham and Solihull
Clinical Commissioning Group

NHS
Birmingham Women's
and Children's
NHS Foundation Trust



The **Eveson**
Charitable Trust



A big thank you to all those mums and dads who agreed to have their photos taken for our impact report.

Special thanks Bav and Neel, Holly and Becks, and Fiona and Clement for inviting us into their homes to take photos and then to document their journeys with Acacia. Nothing illustrates the impact of our work better than these stories.