



Business Plan – Mother & Baby Support Group (Wales)

(Working alongside Mother & Baby Units and Early Years Services)

Part- A

1. Business Overview

The Mother and Baby Support Group is a community-based programme offering emotional, practical, and developmental support for new mothers and their babies across South Wales, with an initial focus on the Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot baby units. According to **Ty Seren: Partnerships for Progress (2026)**, families need a service that helps them navigate the difficult transition from maternity or specialist perinatal care back into everyday life, ensuring continuity of guidance, reassurance, and community connection after hospital discharge.

The initiative provides a safe, nurturing, and non-judgemental space where mothers can share experiences, build confidence, and develop supportive peer relationships. Through weekly sessions, workshops, and drop-in opportunities, mothers receive guidance from trained facilitators on bonding, feeding, sleep, and maternal mental health. In line with **Pembrokeshire (2019)** guidelines, the programme prioritises emotional wellbeing by offering sessions led by perinatal support workers and mental health professionals to promote open discussion and teach practical coping strategies. Alongside this, baby-focused activities such as sensory play and interactive storytelling sessions will be available to support early learning and secure attachment with your new baby.

Meeting regularly in accessible community venues including family centres, halls, and hospital-linked facilities the group aims to become a trusted local resource grounded in inclusivity, empowerment, and connection. According to the **Department of Health and Social Care (2021)**, effective maternal and infant support relies on a strong multi-agency approach, involving collaboration between mother and baby units, hospitals, Flying Start, health visitors, early years practitioners, and mental health services. This integrated working ensures continuity of care and sustained support for families' once clinical services end.

Ultimately, the Mother and Baby Support Group acts as a vital bridge between professional health provision and community networks, strengthening maternal wellbeing, supporting early child development, and helping build more connected communities across South Wales by doing this we hope to low maternal mental health rates and create strong, resilient mothers who feel empowered and have the support during a difficult transition to motherhood.

2. The Idea and Its Purpose & the link to early years

The Mother and Baby Support Group was developed in response to rising concerns about maternal mental health. The **Joint Commissioning Committee NHS Wales (2020)** highlights that many mothers experience postnatal depression and emotional difficulties due to inconsistent support after leaving hospital or specialist services. Across South Wales and the wider UK, new mothers frequently report feeling isolated, overwhelmed, and unsure in the early stages of parenthood, especially when they lack strong family or community networks.

(Maternal depression and its impact on child development | Centre for Academic Mental Health | University of Bristol, 2016) states that despite high-quality maternity and clinical provision, a significant gap remains once formal postnatal care ends. Many mothers continue to face loneliness, anxiety, and challenges adjusting to life with a newborn, with limited opportunities for peer support or ongoing guidance. The Mother and Baby Support Group aim to fill this gap by creating a structured, inclusive community network that extends the care pathway beyond hospital-based services. It offers a consistent, welcoming space where mothers can share experiences, access professional support, and receive emotional and developmental guidance for themselves and their babies.

The programme operates as a six-week course within Ty Seren, the Bridgend mother and baby unit, with up to ten participants in line with the facility's capacity. Mothers meet in a communal space to engage with peers, multi-agency professionals, and mental health specialists. Key aims include helping mothers set personal goals, establish healthy boundaries, and develop strategies for creating safe, stable environments for their babies. Activities across the six weeks are designed to promote emotional wellbeing, strengthen parent-infant bonding, and prepare families for a smooth transition toward independent living. After discharge, mothers can return for follow-on sessions focused on later stages of motherhood and new developmental milestones.

(National evaluation of Families First | GOV.WALES, 2026) argues that maternal mental health is central to early years development, as a mother's emotional wellbeing directly shapes her child's cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Unmet mental health needs increase the risk of poorer outcomes for children, reinforcing the importance of sustained early support. This model aligns with Welsh Government priorities around early intervention, prevention, and family support, as outlined in the Early Years Delivery Plan and the Together for Mental Health Strategy.

Overall, the Mother and Baby Support Group aims to build a long-term culture of connection and community support, ensuring mothers feel valued and confident while giving their children the best possible start in life.

3.benefits and link to early years development

The Mother and Baby Support Group offer significant benefits for both mothers and their babies, providing continuous support at a stage where many families feel isolated after leaving formal services. By delivering structured sessions within **Ty Seren: Partnerships for Progress (2026)** and continuing support after discharge, the programme enhances maternal wellbeing, reduces anxiety, and builds confidence through access to trained professionals and peer networks.

(Spenner, 2024) supports that it is vital for mothers to gain practical skills around bonding, feeding, sleep, and emotional regulation while developing personal goals and strategies that help create safe, nurturing home environments. These improvements in maternal mental health directly influence early years development, as emotionally well mothers are better able to respond sensitively to their babies' needs. The programme's focus on secure attachment **(Bowlby, 1969)**, sensory play, early learning activities, and consistent routines supports infants' cognitive, social, and emotional growth from the earliest stages. By aligning with Welsh Government priorities around prevention and early intervention, the initiative strengthens family resilience and ensures children receive a positive start in life. Overall, the Mother and Baby Support Group acts as a crucial link between professional care and community support, improving outcomes for mothers while laying strong developmental foundations for their children.

4. challenges and barriers

The Mother and Baby Support Group may encounter several challenges and barriers when putting the programme into practice. **NHS (2022)** argues one major challenge is ensuring consistent engagement, as mothers experiencing low mood, anxiety, or overwhelming responsibilities may struggle to attend regular sessions. **(Staffing pressures and the impact on care - Care Quality Commission, 2024)** states that staffing roles in mental health are not being filled with 9% of roles in mental health trust NHS unfilled in march 2025, which is allowing recruitment and retention to lead to significant challenges around staff experience, skills and competencies, which are exacerbating pressures on service and staff themselves, as they are feeling burnt out and overworked. which could lead mother and baby support group to Staffing and resource limitations, particularly if there are not enough trained professionals, perinatal specialists, or multi-agency partners available to deliver high-quality support each week. Access to suitable community venues and long-term funding may pose additional obstacles, as sustained financial investment is essential to keep the service running beyond the initial period **(Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2022)** states that an analysis from the royal college of psychiatrists finds that almost two thirds of integrated care boards in England planned real-terms cuts to funding to perinatal mental health services in 2024-2025, despite demand being as high as ever. Confidentiality, safeguarding, and balancing the diverse needs of mothers from different backgrounds can also be complex, requiring careful planning to maintain a safe and inclusive environment. Another challenge is the transition after mothers leave the unit; maintaining participation in follow-on sessions can be difficult once families move into the community and face new pressures. **(National Institute for Health and Care Research, 2021)** adds that a further challenge relates to culture and the different expectations, beliefs, and experiences that mothers bring with them. For some families, especially those from minority ethnic backgrounds or communities with strong cultural traditions around parenting, asking for help outside the family may feel unfamiliar or even uncomfortable. Language barriers, stigma around mental health, or concerns about being misunderstood can make it harder for mothers to engage confidently with support services. It's important that the programme is culturally sensitive, takes time to build trust, and adapts its communication and activities so that all mothers feel welcome, respected, and included. Finally, there may be barriers linked to stigma around maternal mental health, as some mothers may feel hesitant to seek help or speak openly about their experiences. These challenges highlight the importance of strong multi-agency collaboration, reliable resources, and ongoing engagement strategies to ensure the programme can achieve its full impact.

Part B

5. Market Need, Demand, and Target Users

Across Wales and the wider UK, there is increasing recognition of the importance of maternal mental health, early intervention, and accessible community support. The postnatal period strongly influences both parental wellbeing and early childhood development, yet many families continue to face barriers in accessing consistent help once hospital or clinical care ends. National frameworks such as **Together for Mental Health (Welsh Government, 2012)**, the **All-Wales Perinatal Mental Health Pathway (PNMH Programme and Pathways, 2022)**, and the **Early Years Delivery Plan (Welsh Government, 2024)** highlight the need for early detection, holistic support, and continuity of care. However, gaps remain between short-term clinical treatment and longer-term community-based provision, leaving many mothers without sustained emotional or practical support.

To identify areas of greatest need, **DataMapWales (2025)** was used to analyse regional deprivation levels, which, combined with community feedback, identified Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot as priority locations. Mothers in these areas reported limited access to support groups and helpline services, alongside increasing levels of social isolation—an issue heightened by the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors align with Public Health Wales priorities, which emphasise early intervention to reduce later demand on statutory services and improve long-term family outcomes.

The primary users of the service are mothers with babies aged 0–2 years who may be experiencing emotional distress, postnatal mental health challenges, limited support networks, or inconsistent postnatal care. This includes first-time mothers and those referred from hospitals or mother and baby units who require continuity of support after discharge. Secondary stakeholders such as midwives, health visitors, Flying Start teams, early years practitioners, and NHS partners will play a key role in referrals and integrated care, supporting alignment with wider Welsh Government priorities around prevention, mental health, and reducing inequalities (**Department of Health and Social Care, 2021**)

Initial delivery will focus on Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot, and nearby communities, where socio-economic challenges, transport barriers, and higher rates of perinatal mental health difficulties increase the need for localised, accessible support. To reduce these barriers, the programme will use community venues, flexible delivery models, and strong multi-agency collaboration. Ongoing evaluation, volunteer involvement, and targeted funding will help ensure the long-term sustainability and responsiveness of the service.

I am well positioned to lead this project due to both lived and professional experience. As a mother who has faced mental health challenges, I have first-hand insight into the pressures of the postnatal period, enabling me to approach this work with empathy and understanding. Alongside this, my degree in Early Years Education provides a strong foundation in child development, early intervention, and the importance of secure parent-infant relationships. This combination of personal experience and academic knowledge enables me to deliver a service that meets the emotional and developmental needs of mothers and their babies effectively.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Inclusive and accessible: Open to diverse backgrounds, cultures, and family structures.
- Multi-agency collaboration: Involves health visitors, midwives, Flying Start, NHS partners, and early years practitioners.
- Holistic approach: Emotional wellbeing, peer support, parenting guidance, and early years development are all integrated into your model
- Strong evidence base: use of Welsh Government reports, Public Health Wales data, and DataMapWales (2025) to show a clear need for the service.

WEAKNESSES

- Reliance on consistent attendance: Mothers experiencing anxiety, low mood, or overwhelm may struggle to attend weekly sessions regularly.
- Early-stage funding requirements: Long-term sustainability depends on continued funding, grants, and community investment.
- Geographic limitation: Initially limited to Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot, meaning other high-need areas will not be reached immediately.
- Need for specialist staff: Requires trained facilitators, mental health workers, and multi-agency professionals, which may be difficult to secure consistently.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Clear market need: Data shows high levels of postnatal isolation, mental health challenges, and limited community support in targeted regions.
- Partnership opportunities: Collaboration with hospitals, local authorities, voluntary organisations, and community centres.
- Could reduce pressure on NHS services: Preventative support may lower demand for statutory mental health or crisis interventions.
- Strong potential for expansion: Once established, the programme could be scaled to neighbouring regions with similar levels of deprivation.

THREATS

- Competition from existing services: Other support groups or charities may run similar programmes in neighbouring regions.
- Policy changes: Any shift in early years or health service priorities could redirect funding or resources away from community-based projects.
- Stigma around maternal mental health: Mothers may be hesitant to seek help or participate in group sessions.
- Staff shortages: High demand on midwives, health visitors, and perinatal teams could limit partnership availability.

6.Funding

Research into funding opportunities shows that projects supporting maternal mental health, early intervention, and early childhood development are strongly prioritised within Welsh policy and UK-wide charitable funding streams. According to the **Welsh Government's Early Years Delivery Plan (2023)**, funding is increasingly directed toward programmes that reduce inequalities, strengthen parent-infant relationships, and provide community-based prevention services. This aligns closely with the aims of the Mother and Baby Support Group.

The **(Programme for government, 2022)** and the **Together for Mental Health strategy Welsh Government (2012)** also highlight commitments to improve perinatal mental health support across Wales. Local health boards, including Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Swansea Bay UHB, offer partnership funding for third-sector providers delivering community interventions that reduce demand on statutory services. These funds often support staffing, pilot programmes, and multi-agency collaboration.

National charitable organisations also provide relevant grants. **(The National Lottery Community Fund, 2019)** prioritises projects that improve family resilience and wellbeing, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

Overall, research indicates that Welsh Government early years grants, local authority funding, and national charitable foundations offer strong alignment with the project's aims, particularly due to their focus on prevention, early intervention, and improving outcomes for families in high-need communities.

7.links to early years development

The Mother and Baby Support Group make's clear and meaningful links to early years development by focusing on the crucial period from birth to age two, children form the foundations for their emotional, social, and cognitive growth which supports **(Welsh Government, 2024)** as it's believed that development within and across the five developmental pathways is dependent on the quality of our interactions and the learning experiences and environments we create. The programme promotes focusing on both mother and babies' needs to allow both to meet their developmental needs. **(NHS, 2022)** argues that the postpartum period of a women's life can be a very challenging time, to then also take on the sole responsibility of caring for a newborn can be difficult to comprehend, so mother and baby support group acts like a bridge to support the mother to allow the mother to give the baby the secure and holistic care they deserve.

secure attachment through bonding activities, sensory play, and responsive interactions, all of which support healthy brain development. By prioritising maternal mental health, the service also strengthens early caregiving, recognising that a mother's emotional wellbeing directly influences her baby's developmental outcomes. Through practical workshops on feeding, routines, and child development, the programme builds parental confidence and encourages sensitive, informed caregiving. Early stimulation is further supported through storytelling, age-appropriate play, and interactive learning activities. By targeting families in areas identified through **DataMapWales (2025)** as facing higher deprivation and perinatal mental health challenges, the project addresses early years inequalities and promotes better long-term outcomes for vulnerable children. Overall, the service aligns closely with Welsh Government priorities around prevention, early intervention, and improving early childhood wellbeing.

The Mother and Baby Support Group align most strongly with John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, which emphasises the importance of secure, responsive caregiver–infant relationships in the earliest years of life **(Bowlby, 1969)**. Bowlby argued that a baby's emotional, social, and cognitive development relies on consistent, nurturing interactions with their primary caregiver, and the programme's focus on maternal mental health, bonding activities, and emotional wellbeing directly reflects this principle. By supporting mothers to build confidence, manage their mental health, and engage in positive, sensitive caregiving, the service helps create the secure base that Bowlby identified as essential for healthy early development **(Bowlby, 1988)**. Although the programme also aligns with wider ecological views, its central focus on strengthening the parent–infant bond positions Bowlby's attachment theory as the most relevant theoretical underpinning.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs **(Maslow, 1943)** provides a useful framework for understanding how the wellbeing of mothers directly influences the development and security of their babies. Maslow proposed that human needs are structured in a five-level hierarchy, beginning with basic physiological needs such as food, sleep, and safety, and progressing towards love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation. According to this theory, individuals must have their lower-level needs met before they can effectively engage with higher-level emotional and psychological growth. The Mother and Baby Support Group align closely with this model by helping mothers meet essential emotional and social needs during the postnatal period. Through mental health support, peer connection, and practical guidance, the programme

strengthens mothers' sense of safety, belonging, and confidence. When mothers' needs are supported, they are more able to provide responsive, nurturing care, which in turn creates a stable environment where their babies can thrive. Maslow's theory therefore highlights the importance of supporting maternal wellbeing as a foundation for positive early years development.

Several organisations in Wales and the wider UK offer elements of postnatal support, but none provide the same holistic, structured model proposed in the Mother and Baby Support Group. Programmes such as **(Flying Start: guide for parents and carers | GOV.WALES, 2025)** which deliver government-funded early years support in disadvantaged areas, including health visiting and parenting programmes, while charities like **(home-start, 2019)** offer weekly one-to-one visits for vulnerable families. NHS perinatal mental health teams also provide specialist clinical input, and family centres offer general parenting sessions and drop-ins. However, these services are often time-limited, clinically focused, or not specifically designed for mothers within mother and baby units. Crucially, none combine weekly group sessions, targeted emotional wellbeing support, early bonding activities, and continued community-based follow-up after discharge. This gap demonstrates that, although similar services exist, no single organisation delivers the fully integrated postnatal, developmental, and mental health support model outlined in this business plan, reinforcing the unique value and necessity of the proposed project.

Looking ahead, the Mother and Baby Support Group presents strong opportunities for further development and wider impact across the early years sector. With additional research into long-term outcomes, maternal mental health trends, and early intervention strategies, the programme could be refined and expanded beyond its initial small-scale implementation within mother and baby units. The model has clear potential to be adapted for delivery across family centres, Flying Start hubs, health visiting teams, and community early years settings throughout Wales. As strong evidence emerges around its effectiveness in reducing postnatal isolation and improving early child development, the service could be scaled regionally or nationally, supporting a greater number of families in diverse communities. Future developments might include digital or hybrid delivery, specialist sessions for fathers and extended families, or targeted support for high-risk groups. Overall, while the project begins as a focused intervention within a specific setting, it has the capacity to grow into a broader early year's initiative that contributes meaningfully to Welsh Government priorities and strengthens outcomes for families across the early years field.

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