

This essay will analyse how the national campaigning organisation, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), has engaged with the challenge of perinatal mental illness in the UK, and the lack of services currently provided in Wales. Its National campaign *Fight for a Fair Start* will be critiqued, exploring how the NSPCC funds, promotes and engages with the movement, comparing it to another NSPCC campaign and highlighting issues raised by its advertising the need for improvement.

According to its website, the NSPCC, currently runs a national campaign called *Fight for a Fair Start*, (NSPCC, 2020). This is a drive to provide treatment services in perinatal mental illness (PMI) services, for women, partners and families in the UK. Harrington and Joel (2019) state that the psychological support on offer during the perinatal period is somewhat of a postcode lottery. This means not everyone gets the help they need to support babies having the best start in life (Nursing Times, 2019), however, with the NSPCC (2019) estimating that one fifth of mums and up to one in ten dads experiencing some sort of mental illness during pregnancy and after the birth of a child, the *Fight for a Fair Start* campaign raises public awareness of PMI with an aim to reduce stigma associated with it and ensure all of the UK has equal access to services of equal quality at the necessary time in their lives (Witcombe-Hayes, 2018).

Perinatal mental health problems are defined by the National Institute for Health Care and A as an assortment of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, and postnatal psychosis which can begin during pregnancy or within the first year after a baby is born (NICE, 2020). Howard *et al.*, (2014) challenges this, however, by proposing that symptoms are more prevalent in women with a diagnosis of depression or mild mental illness pre pregnancy, therefore suggesting that this period is also a time in which conditions can return or worsen.

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) define the perinatal period as the time between day 154 of pregnancy and day seven post birth. This differs from the definition by the National Health Service (no date) in that perinatal mental health problems are considered to continue for up to a year after the birth of a child. Irrespective of time frame, there is an abundance of evidence to support the promoting of emotional well-being and the

minimisation of mental illness for women and their families during pregnancy and beyond within the social care arena. PMI can have many adverse effects on maternal well-being and can cause significant risk to a child's development Lowdermilk *et al.*, (2014). Perinatal depression, for example, can interrupt the receptive and thoughtful care processes necessary for a new baby to thrive emotionally and socially, which Theorist Bowlby (1969) suggests makes it difficult for attachments to take place, Supported by Feldman *et al.*, (2009) who sites that a depressed parent typically engages less with a baby and can be significantly less responsive to a child signalling its needs.

Specific to Wales, there are three key areas that the NSPCC is campaigning for within *Fight for a fair start*. These being specialised perinatal mental health midwives and health visitors within each health board, a mother and baby unit accessible to all when required, and for funding to create perinatal mental health services of equal quality, meeting national standards, across the whole of Wales (NSPCC, 2020). According to Welsh Government (2019) people in Wales should have access to an assortment of seamlessly delivered services which are close to home and personally tailored based on unique requirements to those needing support and to those closest to them, however, women currently undergoing perinatal mental health illnesses in Wales, have not had access to a mother and baby unit in Wales since 2013 (Witcombe-Hayes, 2018). Locally, the requests of the NSPCC are directly in line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the key legislation in Wales seeking to optimise the long-term health and well-being of its citizens (Public Health Network Cymru, no date). However, NHS Wales (2018), suggest the lack of an adequate perinatal mental health units in the country could be seen as a direct violation of section 29(1) of the Equality Act which specifies that 'A person (a 'service provider') concerned with the provision of a service to the public or a section of the public (for payment or not) must not discriminate against a person requiring the service by not providing the person with the service' (Equality Act, 2010).

In order to raise awareness of the lack of perinatal services in Wales, the NSPCC (2020) encourage the public to promote the campaign by emailing their Welsh Assembly Members. A template email is provided, and a list of Welsh Assembly Members is offered. It is then up to the campaign participant to complete the information required. In response, a mailing is received back with a generic letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services. Gething (2019) confirms that the Welsh Government 'remain committed' to improving

perinatal services in Wales with community services now in every health board, and a promise to continue funding this support as a matter of priority. Despite assurances though, the Welsh Government have been unable to meet its target of a specialised Mother and Baby Unit within Swansea Bay University Health Board and are seeking an interim solution, the update on its progression is due in April 2020 (Gething, 2019), and on investigation, there is no mention of a new unit within the draft budget for 2020-2021 (Welsh Government, 2019).

On researching the campaign, it can be seen that *Fight for a Fair Start* does not directly ask for a financial contribution. The funding for the campaign appears to come from a partnership with a 'luxury brand' fragrance company 'Jo Malone London' who divide seventy five percent of sale proceeds from a £48 charity candle to ten UK well-being organisations (Jo Malone London, no date). The NSPCC receive the highest share at thirty nine percent of sales, equating to £14 for every candle sold. Since 2012, £1,628,516.77 worth of candles has been sold by Jo Malone London, however, neither the NSPCC or Estee Lauder, the current owner of Jo Malone London, can inform upon request, which were general sale or charity candles, the annual breakdown of amounts sold or how much the NSPCC has benefited from the sales.

An additional consideration of the *fight for a fair start* campaign is the lack of knowledge surrounding it due to a lack of promotion when compared to the NSPCC *PANTS* campaign, which continues to dominate the charities advertising landscape (NSPCC, 2020). This is due to *Fight for a Fair Start* being changeable depending on where in the UK you support it from, however, it could also be assumed that perinatal health is not as high on the public agenda as is child sexual abuse, the *PANTS* campaign having dedicated Songs, posters, television adverts and schools resources embedded in its campaign material (NSPCC Learning, 2020). Looking at how NSPCC funds are spent, (NSPCC Accounts, 2019), it can be seen that much of its donated money is spent on the protection of abused and neglected children in contrast to the prevention of abuse occurring. This suggests that the organisation prioritises categories of abuse over others. This is contested by Southall, Samuels and Golden (2003) who choose to categorise child abuse into its motivations, mental illness or low educational attainment, believing that children of all types of abuse will often become socially excluded and disturbed regardless of the type of abuse suffered. This is confirmed by Felitti *et al*, (1998) who established research into adverse adult health outcomes and the links between adulthood illness and childhood adversity, however, the NSPCC confirm that they stand up for all

children in Wales and the UK, consistently working to create new, and improve existing policy with an insistence that laws need to change to protect all children (NSPCC, 2020).

Another reason for its apparent lack of engagement could be that campaigns such as *Fight for a Fair start*, can be perceived as scaremongering. Gutteridge and Richens (2020) suggest that with an increased awareness of PMI, coupled with organisations such as the NSPCC drawing attention to the necessity for service provision, there are a growing body of women declining to journey into motherhood for fear of becoming mentally unwell. *Gold and Wilson (2002)* state that incentives for families to remain childfree are as multifaceted and complex as the motivations to start a family with many couples content to avoid repeating the traumas experienced in their own families. This is confirmed by Anke, Slinning and Skjelstad (2019) stating that the most prevalent concerns of a woman on becoming pregnant and in relation to mental illness were that of the impact of mood on both mothering and adult relationships, taking medication while pregnant or post-partum and the risk of PMI and its heredity. The Office for National Statistics (2018) validates this evidence and records that the average completed family size remains at its lowest level since records began.

The awareness of perinatal mental illness is increasing. Campaigns by charities such as the NSPCC are highlighting an increased need for support, not just postnatally but also during pregnancy, especially for women with a history of emotional instability. Campaigns, however, do also emphasise the prevalence of PMA and it can be seen that this can increase fear in women of a child bearing age. It is clear that the information available alongside the *Fight for a Fair Start* campaign makes the decision to start a family complicated. Suggestions for safeguarding both adults and children in the instance of PMI is being better advised of what to expect, the anticipation of emotional distress and the uptake of services when available (Cleaver, Unell and Aldgate, 2011).

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