



Pregnancy
Sickness
Support

HELPLINES OPERATOR

RECRUITMENT PACK 2022



Pregnancy Sickness Support is the only registered UK charity working to improve care, treatment and support for people suffering from Nausea and Vomiting in Pregnancy (NVP) and the severe form of the condition Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG).

HG is a debilitating and isolating condition which renders people socially isolated and unable to advocate for themselves due to prolonged and extreme nausea and vomiting which can persist throughout the pregnancy. People with HG can be bed bound for months on end with vomiting in excess of 30 times per day and experiencing extreme and severe nausea every waking moment. Complications include dehydration, malnutrition, hyponatraemia, Wernicke's encephalopathy, preterm labour, intrauterine growth restriction and a host of additional complications.

Around 10% of wanted pregnancies affected by HG end in termination.

Awareness of HG and the treatments available varies widely, with some healthcare professionals still dismissing it as a normal part of pregnancy and concerns around medication use in pregnancy persist due to the tenacious shadow of the Thalidomide tragedy in the 1960's. People with HG commonly report feeling alone, confused and unable to access the treatment they need from doctors and Midwives. Unfortunately the treatment options themselves are limited and no one medication is considered curative; rather anti-sickness medications are used to manage and control symptoms as best they can to prevent complications and IV fluids are used to correct dehydration.

Quality of life can be profoundly affected by HG and the condition understandably takes a huge toll on people's mental health sometimes in a lasting way with post traumatic stress disorder and depression and/or anxiety persisting for years after.

The social isolation experienced by people for months as well as the financial hardship can be life changing for people and their partners and family size is often limited due to the severity of HG and its impact.



OUR SERVICES

TELEPHONE HELPLINE

A telephone helpline offering free support and evidence-based information about treatments, coping strategies and local services available, empowering people to advocate for themselves or their loved one.



DIGITAL LIVE CHAT

Website live webchat and WhatsApp text help services offering the same high quality, evidence-based information and support from our trained support team

PEER SUPPORT

Provision of one-to-one and/or group peer support from volunteers who have first-hand experience of the condition and specific training, which seeks to reduce the social isolation and mental health burden of the condition.



ONLINE FORUM

A moderated online forum offering a safe space to share experiences and support.



ACCESSIBLE HG COUNSELLING SERVICE

Currently being established.

VOLUNTEER NETWORK

Recruiting, training, and supporting a national network of volunteers who partake in our many opportunities including peer support, forum support, awareness-raising, social media team, and research participation to name just a few.

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Provision of education and training for healthcare professionals and assistance to hospitals seeking to develop services so that we may have a lasting impact on treatment access for generations to come.



ONLINE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

A website to increase knowledge and understanding among the public and healthcare professionals and portal to access our online webchat and forum.



AWARENESS-RAISING

Distribution of free patient information material to healthcare settings around the UK

OUR IMPACT



In 2021 Pregnancy Sickness Support.....

- Received 3,099 new contacts to our telephone and digital helpline service
- Estimate our number of contacts throughout the year to exceed 10,000
- Matched 540 people for ongoing peer support via our volunteer peer support network
- Established a post-HG support group with almost 700 members in its first year
- Recruited and trained 70 new volunteers, each supported by a volunteer peer mentor
- Worked with a diverse range of community groups around the UK
- Facilitated and supported new research studies across the UK and internationally
- Supported the development of HG services at hospitals around the UK
- Led the conversation of HG through social and mainstream media with coverage on both local and national radio stations, prime time BBC news coverage and other television appearances from our trustees and community.

“Having someone who can relate to what I am going through has been amazing, and really helps me to feel less isolated. [Both peer supporters] are empathetic, immensely encouraging and both have a great sense of humour, which helps me when I’m feeling down.”

“I want to thank the charity for existing. Without help I would have had to terminate my planned and wanted pregnancy. I appreciated that someone also personally followed up to check in”

Nikki's Story

"By the time I was six weeks pregnant I had lost a stone and a half, and was not keeping down any food or fluids. However, knowing nothing about HG I presumed this was what morning sickness was like. I was admitted to hospital over 30 times for IV fluids and antiemetics, spending between one and four nights there at a time. I was told by midwives I 'just had a 24 hour bug' (this was around my 20th admission), or 'you just need to drink water and you'll be fine'. Doctors were reluctant to prescribe me antiemetics, and when they did nothing seemed to work. At one point I was taking around 4/5 kinds of medication totaling 17 tablets a day. When I was finally prescribed prednisolone I cried with happiness, as I was only sick 4-5 times a day instead of 20-30 on an average day. However these were stopped after around 5 weeks despite my pleas and the sickness continued getting worse. I felt very misunderstood by my family, friends, and workplace throughout my pregnancy. This along with being in lockdowns led me to feel very isolated and lonely without much needed support. My partner however was wonderful and took me to and from hospital almost weekly when I was admitted. I was signed off work for the majority of my pregnancy, .

I found PSS when I was in my second trimester. I initially asked for information about brushing my teeth as I was scared about them falling out or decaying due to being so sick and unable to brush them properly. I had such lovely communication with PSS and was informed about the online and peer support. I was nervous to make contact, I think this is because I'd never heard of HG until I was diagnosed, and this was all very new to me. It was a very emotional time initially speaking to someone from the charity.

I felt less alone, had less suicidal ideations, and thought less about termination. I felt so supported and understood, and with the information that I was provided I felt empowered when speaking to consultants and midwives towards the end of my pregnancy. I had ongoing support from a peer supporter until I had my baby girl in August, and it was absolutely invaluable.

I can't put into words how amazing my peer supporter was. She made my feelings feel validated, she empowered me, she provided me with medical information, and I think most of all I didn't feel patronised or seen as having morning sickness. They provided me with information about antiemetics and HG, and I was able to take this to my consultant and advocate to be prescribed prednisolone again, and whilst this was initially discouraged by consultants I eventually got the prescription I wanted and needed to make the end of my pregnancy slightly more bearable. I continued to be admitted to hospital throughout my pregnancy until my c section, and Amber was supportive throughout. She shared some of her experiences which made me feel less alone, and sent me words of encouragement.

My experience with severe HG has led me to feel as though I will never have another child, which is affecting me mentally as I've always wanted 2 or 3, and I know my partner would love more.

My physical symptoms of HG ended the moment my daughter was born via elective c section (chosen due to my HG), however the mental affects continue. My relationship with food has changed, and I no longer enjoy living in my house as it just reminds me of being so unwell.

However, I can wholeheartedly say that these feelings would be so much worse if it wasn't for PSS, and I do believe the charity has saved my life".



Job Description and Person Specification

Post: Helplines Operator

Responsible to: Senior Staff and Trustees

Responsible for: Providing an initial point of contact with the charity, providing information and resources

Location: PSS HQ, 19G Normandy Way, Bodmin, PL31 1RB.

NB. Due to the nature of the role, this is an office-based position.

Hours and Salary

- 30 hours per week over 4 days
- Starting salary of £15,600 per annum (£20,800 FTE)
- Contributory pension scheme

Context and Purpose of Job

Pregnancy Sickness Support is the only registered UK charity working to improve care, treatment, and support for those affected by nausea and vomiting in pregnancy (NVP) and the severe form of the condition: Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG). A recent study found that 4.9% of women terminated a wanted pregnancy and a staggering 52.1% considered termination because of suffering from HG. Calls for help to the charity have doubled in under 2 years and as a result, we have expanded our information and support team to meet the demand for our life-saving service.

Job description

Working within the support team, the Helplines Operator will be the first point of contact for people contacting the charity via our various access routes for information about nausea and vomiting in pregnancy (NVP) and hyperemesis gravidarum (HG). As part of the support team, you will provide information and resources on our telephone helpline, live webchat, social media messages, and email, as well as referring on to other sources of support and expertise. It is the role of the Helplines Operator to respond to requests by offering empathy, understanding, and providing callers with immediate support and validation. The role involves providing medical information in a lay format and requires the ability to understand complex research findings and explain them to others, however, full training will be provided.



Key duties and responsibilities

- To be one of the main points of contact for people affected by NVP or HG providing information and immediate support via phone, email, and webchat
- To respond to requests for information and support in a timely, professional, and compassionate manner, emphasising the validity of their condition and providing an empathetic ear
- To provide appropriate evidenced-based information regarding treatments, services, and self-help techniques as required and within the scope of training and refer appropriately to other PSS team members or external organisations as required
- To inform callers of all the services that the charity offers and signpost to access routes for these
- Make contact for initial assessments for callers wishing to access our peer support service
- To notify the safeguarding lead or senior team members of any calls where there may be an immediate risk to the caller and take action as advised
- Follow charity follow-up procedures, addressing any future needs of the service user
- To identify own needs for support, including emotional support, working with the Chief Operations Officer to access support services if, and when needed
- Identify training needs and attend training courses for continued professional development
- Communicate with the support team, attend monthly meetings discussing cases, clinical updates, and service developments, and use reflective practice for personal and professional development

Organisational Responsibilities

- Support and maintain organisational reputation and presence in all mediums
- Carry out administrative duties, creating and maintaining records using our secure database
- Contribute to the overall achievement of PSS's aims and objectives
- Work well within a team, providing a supportive working environment to all staff and volunteers
- Ensure the values of PSS are upheld
- Attend regular supervision, staff and team meetings as requested
- To participate in networking activities at local and national level
- To contribute to reports
- Undertake any other appropriate duties as determined by the Senior Staff and Board of Trustees
- Carry out duties in accordance with PSS's policies and procedures, including Health and Safety, Confidentiality, Equal Opportunities, Data Protection etc

In addition, the Employer may require you to undertake any other reasonable duties that the Employer may discuss with you from time to time.

You will be required to keep the Employer informed monthly of activities, progress, and other relevant information.

There is room for development both within the role and future progression within the charity.



Person Specification

Essential

- Computer literate (knowledge of word processing, database, spreadsheet and internet systems)
- Strong verbal telephone manner and confidence in communicating on the phone
- Resilience to cope under pressure and with highly emotional callers
- To be caring and non-judgemental
- If a survivor of hyperemesis gravidarum, to have healed physically and mentally from the condition and recovered from any trauma that the condition caused
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Ability to work on your own initiative, manage and prioritise your own workload in line with the needs of service users and support team members
- To be reliable, punctual, and trustworthy
- The ability to work well within a team, adaptable to the changing needs of the team and organisation and work to a deadline

Desirable

- Educated to degree level or equivalent. Ideally in the following or similar subjects: Healthcare; social care; community development/education; third-sector
- Experience in working in a setting providing IAG and/or IAG qualification
- Experience in offering support to an individual, group or organisation with a focus on social disadvantage or a demonstratable awareness of discrimination issues and how they impact individuals and society
- An awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of volunteers and people affected by NVP and HG
- Experience of record keeping and report writing
- Full driving license with own transport (occasional national travel may be required for training/conferences)
- To be able to work flexible hours including evenings and weekends on occasion to meet the needs of sufferers, volunteers and for trustee meetings



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How to apply

Application forms can be found at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/helplineoperator or www.pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk/news/items/helplinesoperator

Please note: we do not accept a CV unless accompanied by a fully completed application form. An application form allows us to compare individuals on like-for-like information to assess their suitability for the role.

Recruitment Timetable

Start Date: ASAP

Interview Date: TBA

Interview location: PSS-HQ 19G Normandy Way, Bodmin PL31 1RB

Queries

Please contact Leonie Searle, Chief Operations Officer, by email at leonie@pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk or by telephone on 07468 484586 (during office hours) for an informal discussion about this role.

Retention of personal information

Please see our privacy policy which can be found at www.pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk/privacy/

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

Pregnancy Sickness Support is an equal opportunity employer. We celebrate diversity and welcome applications from all backgrounds and sections of the community. Should you require the recruitment pack or application form in a different format, or any other reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process please contact office@pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk



Thank you for your interest in this role.

Pregnancy Sickness Support is a registered charity in in England and Wales 1094788
Registered address: 19G Normandy Way, Bodmin, Cornwall PL31 1RB

www.pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk