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# The Perinatal Mental Health

Lived Experiences of Non-Serving Military Mothers:  
A Longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (LIPA) Study.

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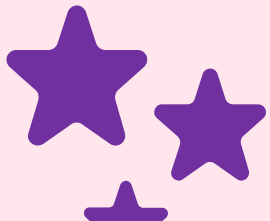
# Perinatal Mental Health

A mother's emotional and psychological well-being during pregnancy and up to one year after birth.

NHS England, 2022



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I met a mum for a coffee  
today...

The power of narrative and perspective.



# What about existing research?



Paucity of  
research



Quantitative  
dominant



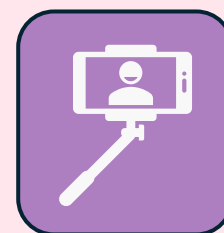
U.S  
centric



Deployment  
focused



Absence of  
European literature



Partial capture of  
the perinatal period



# Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

A qualitative research approach that focuses on exploring how individuals make sense of their lived experiences.

## Involves:

- Detailed, in depth exploration of individual experiences.
- Interpretation by both the participant and researcher, recognising that meaning is co-constructed.
- A small, purposive sample, allowing for deep, rich analysis.
- An idiographic approach which prioritises individual experience before looking for broader patterns.

Smith *et al.* (2009)



# Tracking real experiences over time

6-8 Weeks  
Postpartum



10<sup>th</sup> Month  
Postpartum



28-30 Weeks  
Antepartum







Photo Elicitation

When a picture is worth a thousand words.



# Emerging themes

- ◇ Isolation
- ◇ Self-advocacy
- ◇ Shifting identities
- ◇ Expectation versus reality





## >>> A call to action

What assumptions do we hold about non-serving family member's ability to 'cope'?

How might their lived reality challenge those assumptions?

How can we ensure that research and policy incorporates that lived reality?



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# Thank you.

Happy to receive any questions.

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A special thank you to the mothers in the Dandelion Military Families Peer Support Network for contributing photos to this presentation.