

motherdom[®]

The NEW mental wellbeing platform for parents of little ones

IPSO ANNUAL STATEMENT 2020

PERIOD COVERED: 1 JANUARY 2020 - 31 DECEMBER 2020

Motherdom is an independent title that launched in March 2019. It's the UK's first media platform dedicated to maternal mental health and wellbeing. I, Anna Ceesay, am the "responsible person" as the Founding Editor and Executive Director of the company. *Motherdom* is a registered C.I.C. (Community Interest Company): a form of social enterprise.

Motherdom was published quarterly in 2019, and was available in selected WHSmith stores as well as online via our own website and external partners' websites. In addition to the print version, *Motherdom* was also available as an app. We have now suspended the print magazine and the app, and have moved all of our content online. Our new website <https://motherdom.co.uk> launched in March 2021 and is now the primary hub for all of our articles.

I control all of the content that *Motherdom* publishes. I edit every single article in *Motherdom* in conjunction with our Editorial Board, in accordance with the Editors' Code. On some occasions I also edit with the support of our Deputy Editor.

There were no complaints made to *Motherdom* in 2020 and therefore no adverse findings of the Regulator.

The Deputy Editor and I are the only members of the Editorial team. I am a full member of the Guild of Health Writers and have access to their webinars as a form of training. If I become aware of training opportunities I also share them with the Deputy Editor.

Motherdom's audience is primarily women in the UK, but it has also has a global reach.

I display the IPSO mark in the print magazine (although it's no longer available to buy) and on our website **here** and **here**, along with this text:

Motherdom is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (which regulates the UK's magazine and newspaper industry). We abide by the Editors' Code of Practice and are committed to upholding the highest standards of journalism. If you think that we have not met those standards and want to make a complaint, please email anna@motherdom.co.uk. If we are unable to resolve your complaint, or if you would like more information about IPSO or the Editors' Code, contact IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or visit www.ipso.co.uk

To date I have not received any complaints regarding published stories in either the print magazine or on our website. If I were to receive any complaints in future, I would ensure I had a complete record of the complaint and either corresponded by email or telephone to try and resolve the complaint, in addition to publishing an apology on the website as well as our social media platforms. If I could not resolve the complaint myself I would consult IPSO.

All of *Motherdom's* stories are reviewed by at least one member of our Editorial Board, made up of 16 women who are experts in different areas of maternal mental health or wellbeing, before publication. Our Editorial Board act as advisors to me, but ultimately, all editorial decisions are mine. I take all reasonable steps to fact check all of the claims made in articles. As a health publication it's particularly important to me that the information on the platform is as helpful, accurate and supportive as possible for our readers.

I have not yet had to seek pre-publication IPSO advice for any of our content, but as fully trained (former BBC) journalist, I am aware of the instances where this would be required. I have sought legal advice on general matters such as how writers are able to refer to experiences they may have had either personally or with health professionals in a generic way, as well as checking that our disclaimers at the start of articles are sufficient. We have recently revisited our legal documents and as of March 2021 have a new Vulnerable Adult & Child Policy and Membership Terms, and a revised Disclaimer, Privacy Policy and Contributor Release Form.

I work remotely with all of our contributors and Editorial Board, and correspond over email, by phone or via Zoom.

Interviewees are fully aware that they are being interviewed for *Motherdom*. I record the audio (and video, if it's over Zoom) so have a record of the interview.

Pitching Guidelines, Contributor Guidelines and our Vulnerable Adult & Child Policy have been forwarded to IPSO for their information.

ANNA CEESAY, FOUNDING EDITOR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
4 MAY 2021

Motherdom C.I.C.
27 Mortimer Street, London, W1T 3BL
anna@motherdom.co.uk
+44 20 7097 5962

motherdom[®]

The NEW mental wellbeing platform for parents of little ones

PITCHING GUIDELINES

MAY 2021

WHY DOES MOTHERDOM EXIST?

Journalist Anna Ceesay went through low mood and anxiety during her second pregnancy. Alarmed by the lack of a mainstream media platform dedicated to maternal mental health and wellbeing, she launched *Motherdom* magazine in March 2019. Anna is the Founding Editor and Executive Director of the company.

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

MIND says that 1 in 5 women will experience a perinatal mental health issue, and from *Motherdom's* own research, we know that the problems don't stop when baby is 12 months old. We spoke to 1000 mums with kids under 5 in March 2019 and found that over half have felt anxious since having a child, 45% have felt low, and over a third (35%) depressed. The level of care across the UK for perinatal mental health is variable, and a report from Healthwatch England (Sep 2019) found that 47% of women who needed mental health services found it 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to get support.

Of course, *Motherdom* can never hope to fill the NHS' shoes – Anna was lucky enough to get Cognitive Behavioural Therapy through the NHS – which was life changing for her. *Motherdom* is absolutely not a mental health service, but a media platform. We aim to reach as many mums as possible and give them hope, inspiration and motivation from other women's stories.

WHO, WHAT, WHERE?

Motherdom is a new mental wellbeing media platform aimed at 'mums with little ones', meaning children under 5.

Issues 1-4 of the print magazine were published in 2019, and were stocked in selected WHSmith stores. The print mag is currently on hold but we recently secured funding to be able to launch a new website in March 2021 and a podcast in autumn 2021. The website is now our primary content hub for articles.

WHAT KINDS OF FEATURE ARTICLES ARE IN MOTHERDOM?

REAL-LIFE STUFF

First person accounts of a mum going through a difficult time in her life (with regards to maternal mental health or wellbeing), and how she overcame, or managed to work through, that period. These stories are not scaremongering but rather hopeful and inspiring. These can be emotional to read so we sometimes include a trigger warning at the beginning to prepare more vulnerable readers. We also welcome articles from partners, step-parents, co-parents, foster parents and acting parents which fall into this category.

EXPERT STUFF/PRACTICAL STUFF

Experts in maternal mental health or wellbeing on their area of expertise, often giving practical tips to the reader, things they can try at home. Please be aware that, while we are open to holistic forms of treatment for mental health we do promote evidence-based approaches. We would be grateful if you could consider this when writing for us. We cannot promote treatments that are not evidence-based. In addition, we cannot give medical advice.

DADS STUFF

We include articles from dads. The platform may be called *Motherdom* but of course we need to involve dads in the conversation! These may be similar to the real-life/ expert pieces in their format.

FOOD STUFF

We feature foodies and include one or two of their recipes that are healthy, realistic, and family-friendly. The connection between physical health and mental health is clear, and if we're well nourished then we're better equipped to deal with what life (or a toddler) might throw at us. We ask authors to ensure that all the ingredients listed are safe to eat in pregnancy.

KIDS STUFF

These are articles on kids' mental health and wellbeing. Previous pieces have included book recommendations for their mental health, advice on starting school, how to encourage kids to see the 'magic' in their mistakes, and troubleshooting challenging behaviour.

FUNNY STUFF

Quirky and funny articles about a lighter aspect of maternal wellbeing.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

If you'd like to write something for *Motherdom*, there are some practical things you should know:

- Firstly, as we're a small social enterprise, we're currently unable to offer remuneration for articles. However, we're very happy to include authors' social handles as well as websites.
- We currently only accept pitches from adults aged over 18.
- Not all story ideas that are pitched make it into *Motherdom*. This is absolutely no reflection on the person who is pitching, but rather Anna's passion to make every single story the best fit for our readership.
- We publish pieces about mild-moderate experiences of maternal mental health (as well as maternal wellbeing more generally). We don't have the capacity or expertise to publish pieces that are focused on the more severe or complex areas of maternal mental health issues.
- If you are interested in writing a 'real-life' piece and have your own lived experience of maternal mental health issues, we'll ask you whether you have access to professional support, during and immediately after the writing process. *Motherdom* is passionate about ensuring its contributors are being looked after. *Motherdom* reserves the right not to commission or publish any pieces where we deem that the contributor is too vulnerable or doesn't have access to appropriate professional support. For more information on this point, please read our **Vulnerable Adults and Children Policy**.
- If you're a health professional, we'll ask you to confirm that you hold professional indemnity and public liability insurance before we're able to commission your article. If you're not a health professional, you don't need to have this if you're only sharing your own story.
- At least one member of *Motherdom's* Editorial Board reads every original feature before publication, so they may have some feedback, which Anna passes onto contributors. This is totally normal and nothing to worry about. Their job is to make sure that the content is as helpful, accurate and supportive as possible. There is so much stuff out there (especially on social media) about maternal mental health and wellbeing that's not checked over by an expert and therefore runs the risk of being triggering, misleading and unhelpful for its audience. This is the opposite of what we're trying to do!

- *Motherdom's* editorial process is quite long. It's 'slow journalism' which places quality above everything else. As mentioned previously, an Editorial Board member reviews every original feature article and Anna also edits the pieces, so this takes some time.
- In rare cases, pieces may be pulled entirely if either Anna or the Editorial Board have concerns about the article that can't be remedied. These are never easy decisions to make, but are always made in the interests of the readership. The choice to commission a pitch or publish a contributed article remains at all times, Anna's decision.

TIPS FOR PREPARING YOUR PITCH (ADAPTED FROM GENPROGRESS.ORG)

- Introduce your story idea and define your angle in no more than 100 words. (By "angle" I mean how are you approaching the subject - i.e. *"I'd like to write about my own personal story of maternal OCD"*, or, *"I'd like to write about the latest research linking gestational diabetes with maternal mental health issues"*)
- Explain why your idea is timely, unique, important, and/or of interest to *Motherdom's* readers.

Please use **this form** to send in your pitch.

FINALLY...

If you have any questions about any of this, please do get in touch with Anna – she's on anna@motherdom.co.uk – thanks so much for your time and interest xxx

motherdom[®]

The NEW mental wellbeing platform for parents of little ones

CONTRIBUTOR GUIDELINES MAY 2021

SO, YOUR PITCH HAS BEEN ACCEPTED! HURRAY. HERE SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN YOU'RE WRITING YOUR FIRST DRAFT:

- 1 We publish pieces about mild-moderate experiences of maternal mental health (as well as maternal wellbeing more generally). We don't have the capacity or expertise to publish pieces that are focused on the more severe or complex areas of maternal mental health issues.
- 2 *Motherdom's* vision is to create a world of happier parents. We are not in the business of making our readers feel worse (unlike many mainstream media platforms!) Our content can delve into areas that are still highly stigmatised and can be difficult to speak about. While we absolutely want to allow contributors the space to shine a light on their experiences, we also have to think of our audience. Some of our readers are vulnerable individuals who need signposting. We don't want to trigger our audience and leave them with nowhere to go.

We want our content to give hope that there is a way through. If you're writing about your experience of PND, for example, we want to hear about your journey to recovery as well. What strategies helped you get through? What would you say to a mum who is reading your story and isn't sure where to turn? What are your 'top tips'?

- 3 You need to reference every claim you make:

eg 'According to the charity xxx, gestational diabetes affects xxx number of pregnant women.'

If referencing studies, please use direct quotes where possible. Please include the backlink in your text, rather than a footnote.

eg A recent study from **Imperial College London** showed that 'xxx'

If you're not sure where to access studies, check out:

<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

- 4 If you are writing about your own lived experience of maternal mental health issues, you will have confirmed in the pitching form that you have access to a source of professional support, during and immediately after the writing process. **If you feel triggered at any point in the writing process, please reach out to that professional. You can, of course, at any time, withdraw your pitch if the writing process is triggering you in any way. There is no obligation or expectation from *Motherdom* that an article will be delivered.** As our platform is focused on maternal mental health and wellbeing, we care passionately about this. *Motherdom* reserves the right not to commission or publish any pieces where we deem that the contributor is too vulnerable or doesn't have access to appropriate professional support. For more information on this point, please read our **Vulnerable Adults and Children Policy**.

- 5 The legal stuff:

A We are unable to publish any pieces that contain defamatory statements or are not your own work.

B If any part of your piece has been previously published elsewhere (written by you), you'll need to tell us so we can ask permission from the copyright holder to re-publish.

- C** If you refer to any health professionals in your piece, please use the word “one” rather than “my”. Eg “One midwife/ doctor/ health visitor”, and keep it generic.
- D** *Motherdom* provides information of a general nature, which is designed for general information purposes only. It is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment. We cannot mention the names of any medications in our content.
- E** At the end of the editorial process, you will be sent a contributor release form. This is basically a document that gives *Motherdom* some legal protection in terms of liability and copyright. As we are a small organisation we don't have an in-house legal team so this is something that we have been advised to encourage our contributors to sign.
- 6** Email your first draft to anna@motherdom.co.uk in Word document form. Your article should be an absolute maximum of 1000 words. The best length is somewhere between 600-800 words.
- 7** We follow the Oxford Style Guide so that grammar in all our pieces is consistent. But you don't need to worry about this; Anna will apply these grammar rules when she is editing.
- 8** Send a high resolution, landscape photograph of you along with your first draft.
- A** The ideal size is 1600 x 1066 pixels, but Anna can resize the image if you don't have this specification. Although please note she can't make the image bigger, she can only resize larger images to make them smaller!
- B** If any family members under 18 are in the photo we will need at least one parent or guardian's permission before we can use it.
- C** Tell us the photographer's name so we can credit them correctly in the piece.
- 9** Include your social handle too, and specify which platform. We backlink authors' social handles within the bylines of articles.
- 10** If you have one, please also include your website address. We include these at the end of articles.
- 11** Anna will forward your first draft to the Editorial Board member who is reviewing your piece before she gives you any feedback. You will then receive the Editorial Board member's feedback after several weeks, which may come in the form of comments within the Word document or within a plain text email. You will need to download the Word document on a computer/tablet so that you can see the comments. Anna won't reveal the Editorial Board member's identity to you during the editing process unless you are working on the piece together, or she is aware that you already know each other. In some cases, Anna may ask more than one Editorial Board member to review the piece.
- 12** Anna may then ask you to write a second draft, which incorporates the Editorial Board member's feedback.
- 13** Once you have sent through a second draft, Anna will then edit your piece. She may have to make some difficult decisions regarding your article. Again, this is all about balancing the needs of the contributor with the needs of the audience.
- 14** In rare cases, pieces may be pulled entirely if either Anna or the Editorial Board has concerns about the article that can't be remedied. These are never easy calls to make, but are always made in the interests of the readership. The choice to commission a pitch or publish a contributed article remains at all times, Anna's decision.
- 15** As stated in the Pitching Guidelines, our approach is 'slow journalism'. It takes time to craft each piece so that it's as safe, supportive and accurate as possible. We appreciate your understanding and patience during the editing process.

Thank you for your time – if you have any questions please email anna@motherdom.co.uk.

You might also find it useful to refer back to our Pitching Guidelines.

CHECKLIST FOR SENDING IN YOUR FIRST DRAFT:

- 1 Word document with a maximum of 1000 words.
- 2 High resolution, landscape photo of you. Ideally 1066 x 1600 pixels.
- 3 Photographer's name.
- 4 Your social handle and platform.
- 5 Your website address.

motherdom[®]

The NEW mental wellbeing platform for parents of little ones

VULNERABLE ADULT & CHILD POLICY

POLICY TO PROTECT THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

BACKGROUND

- *Motherdom* is a mental wellbeing media platform that publishes both written content and a podcast. *Motherdom* recognises that those choosing to read/listen and contribute to the platform may include vulnerable adults and specifically those who have experienced maternal mental ill-health.
- *Motherdom* recognises that, in some circumstances, writing or speaking about their own experiences may have a detrimental affect on the ongoing mental health and welfare of an individual.
- *Motherdom* therefore seeks to ensure that the health and wellbeing of individuals who contribute to and access the platform is appropriately supported. The welfare of individuals, vulnerable adults, young people and children is paramount.

We're passionate about ensuring our contributors are being looked after.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to outline steps that *Motherdom* will take to seek to protect those contributors and readers/listeners of *Motherdom* who may be considered vulnerable adults as a result of maternal mental ill-health.

DEFINITIONS

- 'Vulnerable adults' are defined as a person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. This may include those suffering from maternal mental ill-health issues.
- 'Maternal mental ill-health issues' refers to a range of perinatal conditions including (but not limited to): depression, anxiety, OCD, postpartum psychosis, PTSD and birth trauma.

CONTRIBUTORS

- 1 Some contributors to *Motherdom* may be classed as 'vulnerable adults' and may have experienced maternal mental ill-health. They may write about that experience for the media platform, or take part in a podcast episode.
- 2 If a potential contributor is interested in writing a 'real-life' piece and has their own lived experience of maternal mental ill-health issues, *Motherdom's* Founding Editor Anna Ceesay will request that individuals confirm that they have access to professional support, and that support is available to them should they need it at any point in the writing process or immediately following publication. The same process applies to prospective podcast guests.
- 3 'Professional support' could include psychotherapy or counselling with a practitioner whom is either operating through the NHS or privately, is registered by the appropriate professional body and covered by appropriate insurance.
- 4 It is the contributor's responsibility to determine that this professional support meets this criteria rather than *Motherdom's*.

- 5 Anna Ceesay must be satisfied prior to a commission being made, an article accepted for publication, or a guest taking part in the podcast, that the contributor has appropriate professional support in place in the event of increased mental ill-health.
- 6 It remains at all times, the decision of *Motherdom* as to whether a contribution is commissioned and/or accepted for publication. *Motherdom* will ensure that contributors are informed that the decision to commission or publish a contributed article remains at all times, the decision of Anna Ceesay.
- 7 A refusal to commission or publish a contribution may be made if *Motherdom* consider that there may be a detrimental affect or harm on the contributor and/or the contributor has not confirmed that professional support is in place.
- 8 If the contributor feels triggered at any point in the writing process, *Motherdom* asks that they reach out to the professional support which they have identified they have access to. Contributors can, of course, at any time, withdraw their pitch if the writing process is triggering them in any way. There is no obligation or expectation from *Motherdom* that an article will be delivered by the contributor.
- 9 There are instances where pitches that are sent to *Motherdom* will not be commissioned for a full article for other reasons that do not relate to the above.
- 10 In rare cases, there are instances in which an article or podcast interview that has been commissioned is not published, as there are concerns held by either Anna Ceesay or the Editorial Board that cannot be remedied.
- 11 As a small social enterprise, *Motherdom* is unable to offer remuneration for articles or podcast participation. All contributors write and speak on a pro bono basis.

READERS / LISTENERS

- 1 It is recognised that material contained on the *Motherdom* platform may have an effect on vulnerable adults. Some articles can be emotional to read; and some podcast episodes can be emotional to listen to.
- 2 *Motherdom* will include a trigger warning at the beginning of such articles/ episodes to prepare more vulnerable readers/ listeners for potentially emotional content.
- 3 Any trigger warning will be included following consideration by Anna Ceesay, sometimes in consultation with an Editorial Board member.
- 4 An Urgent Warning will be in a 'pop up' form on *Motherdom's* website. Website visitors will be asked to confirm that they have read the Disclaimer and are aged over 18 before they are able to access any written content. This Urgent Warning will also be linked to in any trigger warnings.

URGENT WARNING

Some of the material you read on this website is potentially upsetting. Or you may read an article that makes you realise that you are struggling more than you thought.

If you need further support, please speak to your GP or another healthcare professional within or outside of the NHS. If you are seeking help outside of the NHS, make sure you see someone registered with an appropriate professional body. There is also lots of information available online via MIND or the NHS website.

If you are feeling in crisis, please speak to your GP, or you can call the Samaritans on 116 123. In an emergency, please call 999 or visit A&E.

CHILDREN

- 1 *Motherdom* does not accept pitches for commissions, articles, or podcast appearances from children under the age of 18.
- 2 *Motherdom* asks website users to confirm they are aged over 18 before reading any of the content.
- 3 *Motherdom's* Instagram page has a minimum age requirement of 18.

USE OF CHILDREN'S PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1 *Motherdom* sometimes organises photo shoots for contributors. Parents are welcome to bring their children to these photo shoots and *Motherdom* will always seek parents' permission to use any photographs of children taken during photo shoots.
- 2 On occasions where the parent doesn't attend a photo shoot organised by *Motherdom*, but already has a photograph of them and their child which they are happy for *Motherdom* to use, again, written permission will be requested from a parent or guardian prior to any image being used.