

24<sup>th</sup> February 2016

@sportrelief #MumTalk



## **FERN BRITTON JOINS MUMS AND DADS TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH FOR SPORT RELIEF**

- MORE THAN 1 IN 10 WOMEN DEVELOP A MENTAL ILLNESS DURING PREGNANCY OR WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR AFTER HAVING A BABY
- JOIN THE CONVERSATION FROM 11AM ON TWITTER @SPORTRELIEF USING #MUMTALK
- SPORT RELIEF CASH TO HELP PEOPLE AFFECTED BY MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

As part of a series of new short films produced by Sport Relief, TV presenter Fern Britton will share her experience of maternal mental health alongside other mums and dads from across the UK, who have also been affected, on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February.

The films will be shared on Sport Relief's Twitter feed to shine a light on maternal mental illness in the UK and help to reduce stigma around the issue. The public will also be encouraged to share their stories and talk about their own experiences. Members of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance, which benefits from Sport Relief cash, will be responding during the day to any people looking for advice or support.

By going to @SportRelief on the day, the nation will gain a unique insight into an issue that affects as many as 1 in 10 women yet is still a big taboo and not talked about openly. Many women feel completely alone and too embarrassed to share their true feelings, with 7 in 10 women affected hiding or downplaying their symptoms.

Without understanding, support, and treatment these mental illnesses have a devastating impact on the women affected and on their partners and families. However, with the right help at the right time women affected by maternal mental health problems do get better.

By giving women and men a platform to speak out about maternal mental illness, Sport Relief hopes to highlight what help is out there, and encourage more people affected to seek the support they need to recover.

Cash raised through Sport Relief has been helping to fund maternal mental health projects in the UK since 2010. These projects include the Bluebell Care Trust in Bristol, and the Maternal Mental Health Alliance's 'Everyone's Business' campaign, which raises awareness of the importance of maternal mental health issues at a national level and is helping women and families across the UK to access specialist support.

The contributors featuring in the films have been helped through Bluebell Care Trust and member organisations of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance.

Fern Britton said: "Everyone tells you that having a baby is going to be perfect, so you try to be the perfect mum. However, you're not blooming at all, you're blooming awful. I was lonely, isolated and frightened. I felt lost, like a failure and I couldn't identify with who I was anymore. When the doctor told me what I was feeling was Postnatal Depression it was so liberating, I felt such a sense of relief that I wasn't going mad. Once my family knew, I started to get better. Once I could talk to my family and they understood, it was a wonderful feeling."

"The minute I said the words to someone, help it was there for me. If I had known how easy it was to get help I would have told someone sooner. Having been through this and getting better myself I would urge any mum who might be feeling in a dark place to tell someone - don't wait! If you tell someone, you will get help, and you will get better."

The day is being supported by the Maternal Mental Health Alliance, Bluebell Care Trust, the Royal College of General Practitioners, MIND, Channel Mum who are following the stories @SportRelief and sharing their own views and insight using #MumTalk.

Dr Alain Gregoire, Perinatal Psychiatrist and Chair of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance said: "Being a parent is the most difficult thing any of us ever does and when we go through difficult times we need other people, but if we are not mentally well, we feel alone. Knowing you are not alone, that other people care and want to help, and knowing that if you speak out about how you are feeling you will get help, are crucial steps to recovery. Through this day of activity, Sport Relief is giving every one of us the opportunity to help mums and dads who are suffering from mental health problems at this critical time in their lives"

Sport Relief is back from Friday 18th to Sunday 20th March and there are more ways than ever for you to take part, change lives and feel proud. The money raised will transform people's lives in the

UK and across the world's poorest communities, including people affected by maternal mental health problems.

-ENDS-

FOR MORE INFORMATION / PICTURES OR VIDEO PLEASE CONTACT

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### **Notes to editors**

#### **About Sport Relief**

Sport Relief brings the entire nation together to get active, raise cash and change lives. The money raised by the public is spent by Comic Relief to help people living incredibly tough lives, across the UK and the world's poorest communities. It all leads up to the Sport Relief weekend and a fantastic night of TV on the BBC.

Sport Relief 2016 will take place from Friday 18<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2016. You can run, swim, cycle or even walk yourself proud at events across the country. There's a distance for everyone, whether you're sporty or not. Find out more at [www.sportrelief.com](http://www.sportrelief.com)