

Interpersonal trauma, substance misuse and pregnancy: A phenomenological exploration of pregnant women and midwives in Scotland

Naomi Waddell, Professor Thanos Karatzias, Professor Michael Brown and Dr Catherine Mahoney

Background

- ▶ Britain's longstanding unhealthy relationship with drugs and alcohol.
- ▶ The relationship between interpersonal trauma (IPT) and substance misuse has not been examined fully in the few studies involving pregnant women who misuse substances.
- ▶ UK based midwives attitudes.

The present study aims to:

- Chronologically map out pregnant women's past experiences of abuse and substance use in order to illustrate common pathways through which these occur and explore possible mechanisms underlying these.
- Explore the lived experience of pregnant participants with problematic substance use.
- Explore the lived experiences of midwives with experience of supporting this client group.

Methods

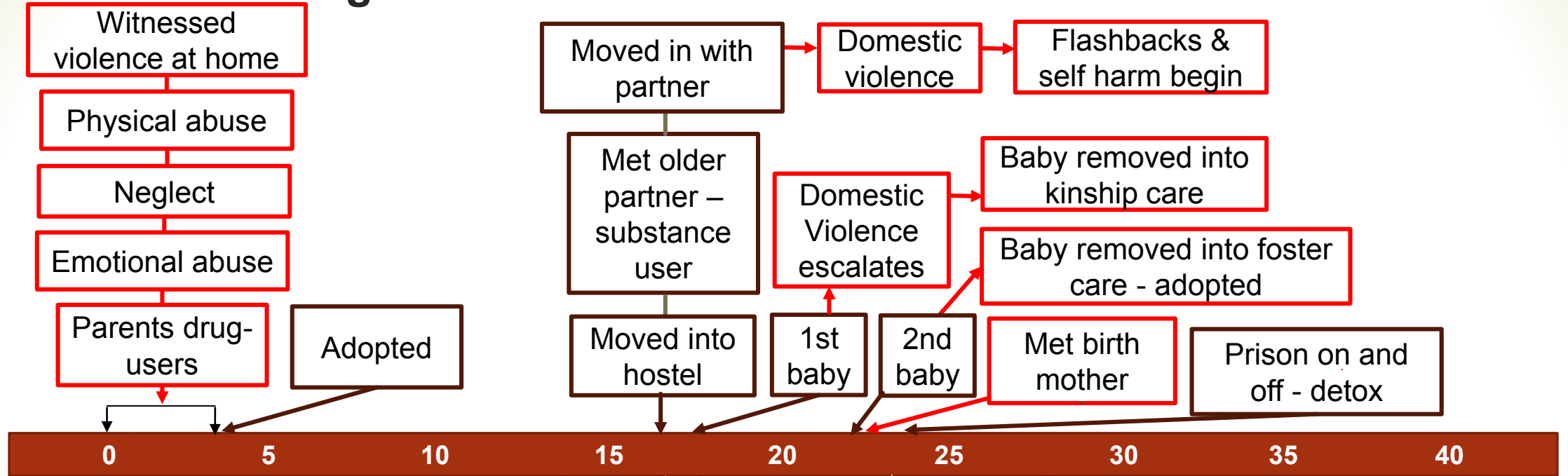
- Recruitment
- Data collection
- Data analysis

Results

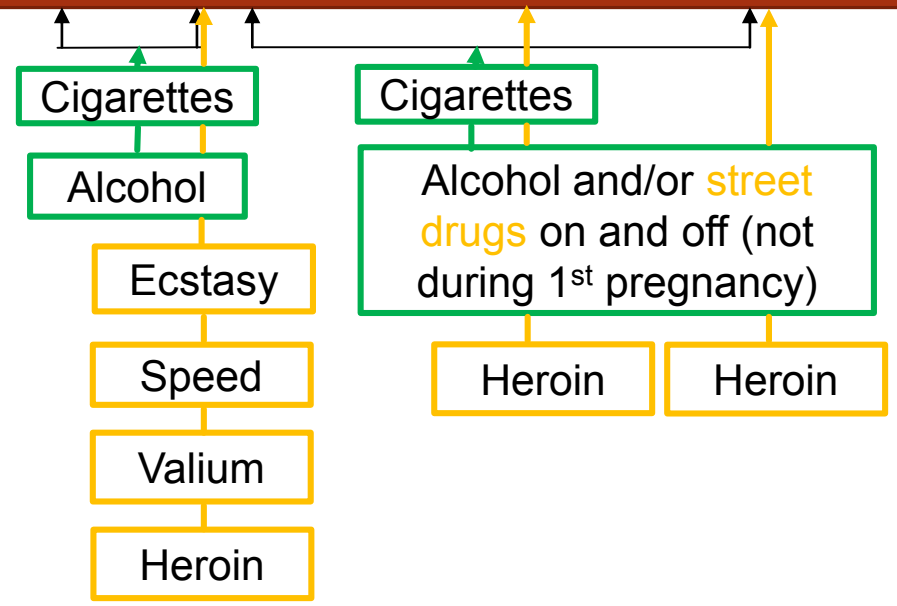
- Chronological timelines



Chronological timeline of life events and substance use - Tina



- Memorable events** (brown box)
- Negative life events** (red box)
- Legal substance** (green box)
- Illicit/illegal substance** (yellow box)



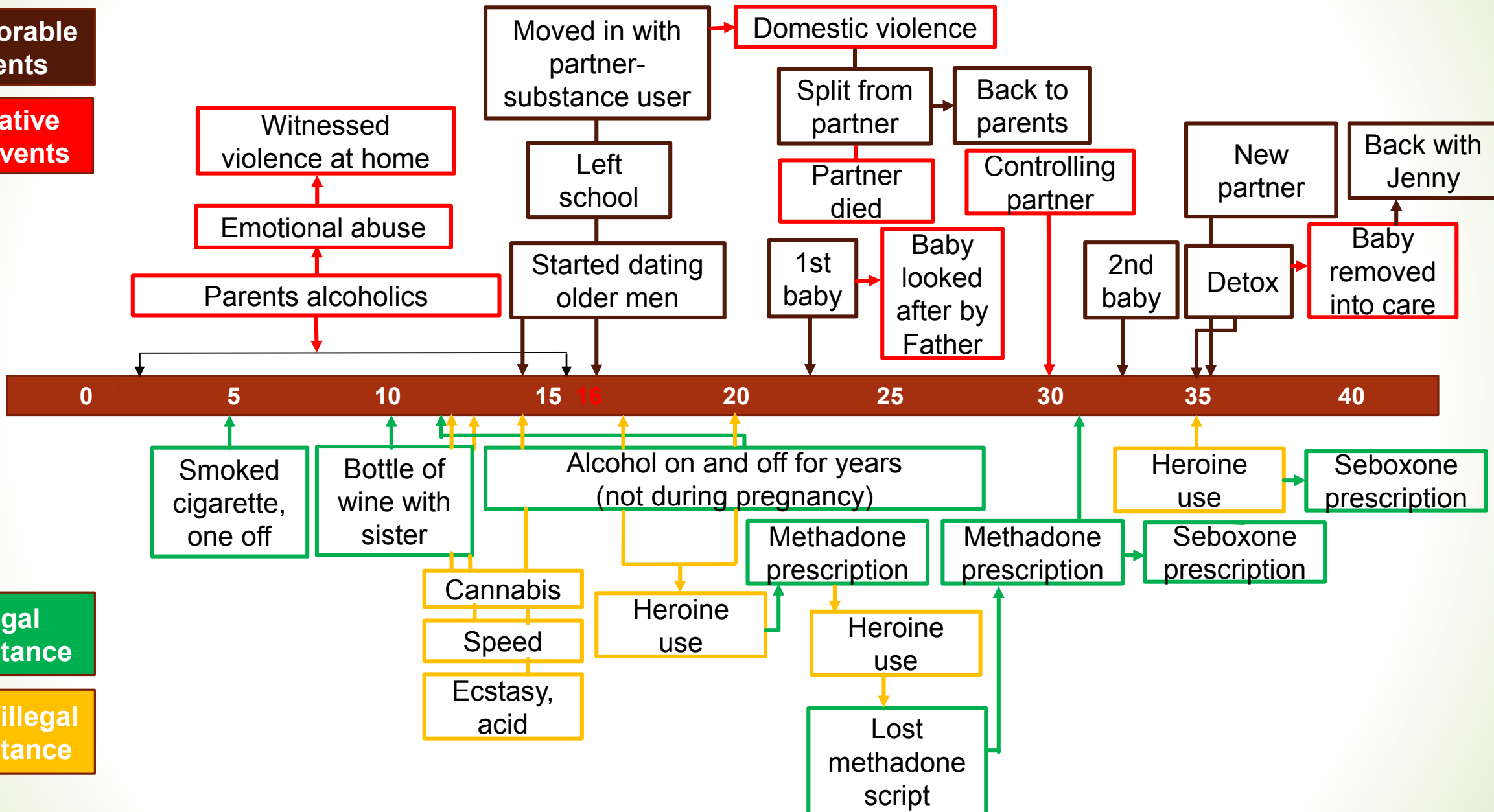
Chronological timeline of life events and substance use - Jenny

Memorable events

Negative life events

Legal substance

Illicit/illegal substance

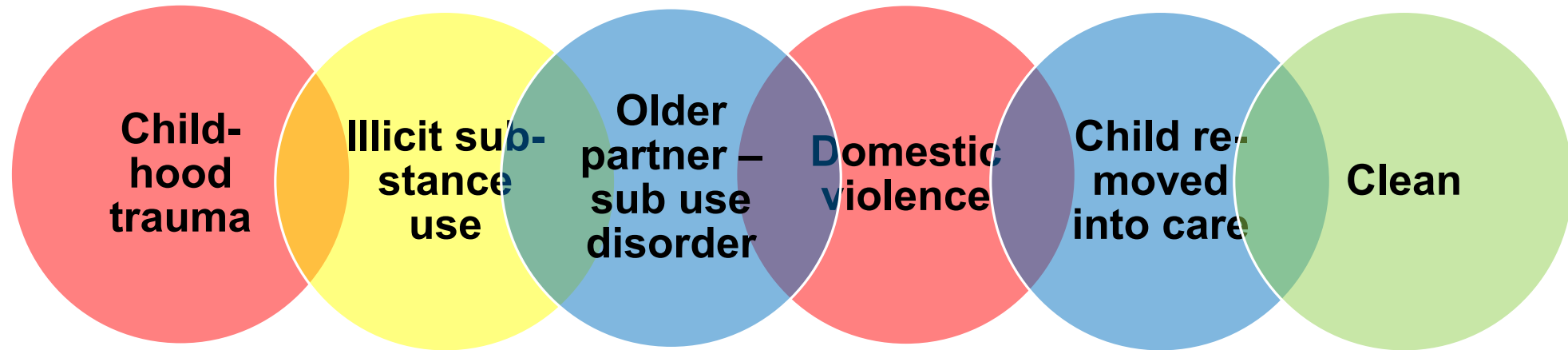


16 = substance dependence

Results

➔ Key life events





Summary of key life events - *Jenny*

Results from interviews using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – pregnant participants



Super-ordinate themes	Sub-themes
Psychological trauma & re-traumatisation	<p>Childhood trauma: “I was always left in the pram to cry”:</p> <p>Re-traumatization: “I thought I was worthless”</p> <p>Substances to block out the pain: “You’re just in the moment”</p>
Dabbling to addiction	<p>Dabbling: “you didn't even really know what you were dealing with”</p> <p>Addiction: “I never had any of my friends then”</p> <p>Stigma: “oh I knew people thought that”</p> <p>Prison: “prison was like my secure place to go”</p> <p>What it means to be clean: “I would like to say that I’m clean now but</p>
Pregnancy & Motherhood	<p>Pregnancy - “I’m terrified that my bairns going to come out rattling”</p> <p>Motherhood – “at times just it it took over”</p> <p>Professional relationships – “I felt that they were kind of on my side”</p>

Super-ordinate theme

Psychological trauma &
re-traumatisation

Psychological trauma

► *“I was always left in the pram to cry”*

*“em my dad battering my mum eh like strangling her em my big brother having to run to my Gran's (pause) she stayed over the road and phone the police (pause) having to put me into the bedroom to keep me safe while they went out em just constant fighting. I was always left in the pram to cry (name of brother) was always always neatly dressed always got the attention and I was just like pushed away aside em pushed away aside and left in a wet nappy damp clothes ” **Tina***

Super-ordinate theme

➔ Dabbling to addiction

Addiction

➤ *“I never had any of my friends then”*

*“Pals (pause) I didn’t really have a lot of pals to be honest when I was using it was just acquaintances em people that I would maybe like buy drugs off of or people in the drug scene that I would maybe sit and have a smoke with (pause) if I couldn’t do it in the house or anything (pause) or just other users that I wouldn’t talk to otherwise” ” **Liz***

Sub-theme:

- Substances to block out the pain

Substances to block out the pain

► *“You’re just in the moment”*

*“em you can use heroin and em just have no worries (pause) it's like you don't think you know what I mean? It's just like (pause) you're just in the moment em you only think about what what you're doing and you you don't really think about past or or any problems it just like (pause) it just takes your your pain away your hurt away (pause) everything” **Rebecca***

Sub-theme

➔ Stigma

Stigma

➤ *“oh I knew people thought that”*

*“Och when you use heroine you’re a dirty junkie a wrong one. You’re a smack head you’re this you’re that you’re like the scum of the earth (pause) your rob your granny’s apparently Oh I knew people thought that about me. I knew it. It made me feel like really low. Today I still get really worried about what people are thinking (pause) smack head (pause) useless junkie and it does come about (pause) and it’s always going to come” **Liz***

Sub-theme:

➤ Prison

Positive impact of prison

➤ *“prison was like my secure place to go”*

*“I got sent to prison (pause) for taking (name of partner) heroin (shakes head)..... that was when I withdrew quite bad and it stopped (pause) my habit (pause) stopped. I'm still on my methadone prescription em but I think (pause) if I hadn't got sent to prison I definitely wouldn't have got clean out here. No way. I wouldn't have been able to do it I don't think. It would have been too hard for me [laughs nervously]” **Jane***

Super-ordinate theme

- Pregnancy & Motherhood

Motherhood

➤ ***“at times just it it took over”***

*“I don't think (pause) I don't think having them like changed things for me in any sense. Em I I think that em (pause) you know my addiction at times just it it took over and it didn't matter what was there and it wasn't until I I took it right to the brink of losing everything before I was like what am I doing? You know em so I don't know I don't know if it changed anything really in terms of my addiction” **Jenny***



Sub-theme

- Professional relationships
- 



I felt that they were kind of on my side

► *“I’ve never felt judged by professionals”*

*“even when I was going through all that with the social work (pause) the midwives where still like a you know they were still a base that I could turn to (pause) I felt that they were kind of on my side if you know what I mean? definitely the midwives are brilliant” **Jenny***



**Results from interviews using
Interpretative Phenomenological
Analysis – midwifery
participants**



Super-ordinate themes	Sub-themes
Psychological trauma	<p>Trauma histories: “I’m always aware that that’s somebodies pits and pieces”)</p> <p>Addiction: They’re (pause) they’re just in a hard place”</p> <p>I do worry: “I think to this day I worry”</p>
Stigma	<p>Stigma in the maternity setting: “They’re killing their babies”</p> <p>Stigma: “Do I judge them?”</p> <p>We’ve forgotten they are mothers: “women like you and me”</p>
Somethings missing	<p>Education & training: “there’s nothing, do you know?”</p> <p>Policy & guidelines: “there’s no flowchart for this”</p> <p>The future: “It would be good if there was</p>

Super-ordinate theme

Psychological trauma

Psychological trauma

➤ *“I’m always aware it’s somebodies bits and pieces”*

“I think you should always be (pause) I’m always aware that that’s somebodies pits and pieces like when they're pregnant (pause) when you’re doing examinations (pause) I have had some women dissociate (pause) you see them just leaving the building (pause) their eyes shut they go somewhere else you know?” **Samantha**

Sub-theme:

➤ Addiction

Addiction

► *They're just in a hard place"*

"when you realised that that drugs has actually much more control of their life than than their new-born baby (pause) I think that is quite eye opening (pause). And I think as much as they maybe want to do it (pause) sometimes their bodies aren't able (pause) capable due to the pregnancy and that's not their fault (pause). They're (pause) they're just in a hard place" Jen

Super ordinate theme:

➤ Stigma

Stigma in the maternity setting

► ***“They’re killing their babies”***

*“I had a conversation where I have said in em the duty room and I’ve said “oh I I quite like these women I feel kind of like I feel I feel sorry for them” and somebody else said “oh I don't know why you feel sorry for them they're killing their babies” (pause) and it's just sad it's sad that people have that in that job (pause) how they can be so em what's the word discriminatory? We wouldn't do that if it was a racist comment (pause) we wouldn't think twice about it would you?” **Sandra***

Sub-theme:

- ➔ Do I judge them?

Stigma

➔ **“Do I judge them?”**

*“Do I judge the mothers? (pause) a small amount but no more than I judge any other mothers (pause). I think if there's honesty (pause) because mums are distressed as well you know (pause) mums are distressed (pause) it's no good. Where does (pause) were does the judgement get women? Does it make me feel better judging her? Well (pause) who knows. But it doesn't make her feel any better. Doesn't make the baby any better” **Samantha***

Sub-theme:

- Somethings missing

Some things missing

► *“It really isn't given priority”*

“we must get it right sometimes.....I think we've got (pause) there's something missing (pause) we skirt round the issues because we don't have enough empathy (pause) we don't know enough. We're we're all up in this sepsis 6 thing everybody study days every other week (pause) there are posters everywhere. Not a poster about substance misuse there's not a (pause) there's nothing do you know?” **Sandra**



What's next?

Thank you

naomi.waddell@napier.ac.uk

