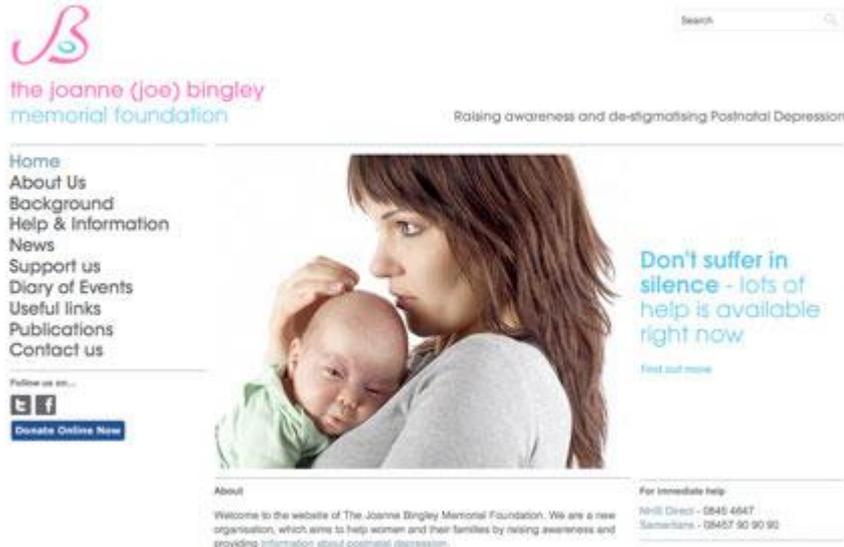




- [Anna Tims](#)
- [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk), Monday 5 December 2011 11.06 GMT

## Charities for Christmas #3: Joanne Bingley Memorial Foundation

We are profiling a number of charities for readers who have time or money they would like to donate, or are seeking help in those areas. Today it's the turn of post-natal depression group the Joanne (Joe) Bingley Memorial Foundation



The Joanne (Joe) Bingley Memorial Foundation was established to to highlight the misunderstood ravages of post-natal depression.

Chris Bingley's wife killed herself when their first child was 10 weeks old. The vivacious nurse had longed for a baby and, at 39, had begun to fear it would never happen. But days after the birth, post-natal depression (PND) set in. Within weeks it had consumed her and she took her own life in April 2010.

Chris has since struggled to bring up his small daughter alone while maintaining his job and establishing the [Joanne \(Joe\) Bingley Memorial Foundation](#) to highlight the misunderstood ravages of PND.

"When Joe died I was beside myself with grief, but there was a burning anger too," he says. "How could such a sensitive, caring nursing professional be allowed to descend into such a desperate state?"

The greatest cause of maternal deaths in the UK is mental illness, yet NHS provisions for women suffering from PND are largely inadequate. In response to Joe's death, [the Patients Association](#) surveyed the perinatal mental health care provided by 150 primary care trusts and found that 55% fail

to offer appropriate information and support to mothers who may be suffering from PND. More than three-quarters had no idea of the incidence of PND in their region.

The memorial foundation, launched in April 2011 on what would have been Joe's 40th birthday, aims to publicise the condition, support sufferers and campaign for improvements to healthcare provision. It is also working with 30 other [charities](#) to set up an umbrella organisation to research the causes and treatment of an illness which devastates lives and costs the UK economy an estimated £60m a year.

"Joe had a family history of PND, and the coroner's report highlighted the failure of the NHS to help her," Chris says. "If the guidelines had been followed she would have been hospitalised when her symptoms became severe and she would still be alive today."

So far, the £14,000 raised by the foundation has been spent on distributing leaflets on PND and its symptoms, and on training mentors to highlight awareness through [Sure Start Centres](#) and health visitors. The foundation website offers comprehensive advice on how to recognize PND and where to turn, and a pilot scheme of local support groups staffed by volunteers in West Yorkshire launches in January. Eventually, it aims to provide every new mother with a booklet of information, and with more volunteers and resources Chris hopes to be able to offer one-to-one mentoring. "So far there is no kind of network like this in the region," Chris says.

The foundation's outreach has already helped other women battling the bewildering, often violent, symptoms of the illness. "I had been to my doctor, and both my husband and I had begged for help from the health visitors and GPs but we were ignored," says Clara Wilson, who has suffered from mental health issues since giving birth to her daughter in January. "I came across a leaflet from the foundation which made me realise my depression is real. I wasn't a bad mum, I was ill. There is very, very little information available about PND so that little leaflet was a lifesaver for me."

The foundation needs corporate sponsors and volunteers to help mentor, fund raise and share their experiences online. It has also [set up a petition to end the postcode lottery in perinatal healthcare](#) and an [online raffle to raise funds](#) runs until 16 December.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2011/dec/05/charities-christmas-joanne-bingley-memorial-foundation?INTCMP=SRCH>