Develop your leadership style

- to use a more directive approach. Studying some of the popular leadership theories can help you understand what works best in given situations, but avoid becoming too prescriptive in your style.
- Clarity Often you will have to make decisions in emotionally charged situations, so it’s important that you remain calm and communicate in a clear and concise manner. Managing your stress levels effectively will help you to think clearly in the heat of the moment.
- Assertiveness You may need to challenge a colleague’s decision or stand up for your patients’ best interests. You need to have a confident approach but to avoid becoming defensive or passive-aggressive.
- Integrity If you want to be a respected leader you must consistently demonstrate integrity and fairness. You may have to make difficult choices, but you can still communicate authentically.
- Vulnerability As a nurse you will never stop learning, so it is okay to reach out to your colleagues and show that you don’t know all the answers all the time.

Mandy Day-Calder is a freelance writer and life/health coach

Learning how to manage perinatal mental illness

Many women have mental health problems during or following pregnancy. A new course aims to equip professionals to offer help

By Lynne Pearce

With more than one in ten women developing a mental health problem during pregnancy or in the first year afterwards, healthcare professionals need the skills to be able to support them effectively.

Now Sheffield Hallam University is launching a distance-learning post-graduate certificate in perinatal and maternal mental health for health and social care staff.

‘If untreated, perinatal mental illnesses can have a devastating impact,’ says Kirsty Schofield, course leader and senior lecturer in midwifery.

‘Women and their families are now presenting with more complex needs,’ says Ms Schofield. ‘And increasing pressures in the health service means that women are often going home earlier from hospital, with continuing support in the community.’

Two modules

The first of two modules – running from September to the end of February – will help to develop the necessary skills to recognise maternal mental illness in pregnancy and during the first year of the postnatal period, helping students to create individual care pathways.
A study by Breast Cancer Care has found that just one fifth of NHS organisations employ one or more clinical nurse specialists dedicated to caring for women whose breast cancer has returned and spread.

It will look at a variety of mental health conditions and their management, including personality disorders, eating disorders, tokophobia (fear of pregnancy), self-harming, schizophrenia, puerperal psychosis, fabricated illness, substance misuse and antenatal and postnatal depression.

The perinatal mental health and the family module – running from March to August – will help develop skills to recognise the effects of maternal mental health on the child’s development, helping students to gain a deeper understanding of family relationships.

‘Professionals can dip into one or both, with credits for each,’ says Ms Schofield. For those who want to continue their professional development, these can be used towards a master’s degree.

**Collaboration**

Created for around 15 participants, the virtual learning course with timetabled online discussions will enable all students to share their learning. ‘The key to the course will be collaboration with other disciplines and colleagues,’ says Ms Schofield.

The aim is to develop confidence through scenario-based learning. ‘If you have the evidence behind you and the confidence to liaise with other professionals, you can help to develop robust services that will give these women a voice,’ says Ms Schofield.

Applications are now open. To find out more, go to tinyurl.com/sheffiel-hallam-course

Lynne Pearce is a freelance health journalist