



Sunbury's Leanne Schultz, with daughter Angela, 11, credits a post-natal depression support group for helping her recover from the illness. Picture: ADAM ELWOOD

## Mums group planned

Barry Kennedy

### POST-NATAL DEPRESSION IN THE SPOTLIGHT

PLANS are afoot to revive a vital post-natal depression group in Sunbury.

The Post-natal Depression Mother to Mother Support Group was a weekly catch-up and midweek sanctuary for mums over a 24-year period at Sunbury Community Health Centre.

But a lack of referrals from GPs and the emergence of informal social media support groups saw it disband earlier this year.

Sunbury mother Leanne Schultz said her referral to

the group almost 12 years ago was enormously valuable in her journey with post-natal depression.

She said the onset of the condition was "rapid" in the days following the birth of her daughter, Angela.

"There was quite a lot of anxiety which was almost paralysing," Ms Schultz said. "I'd experienced anxiety before, but nothing like this, and when you have anxiety and you have a baby you can't stay in bed and pull the cover over you."

Ms Schultz said Sunbury Community Health counsellor Terrie Hollingsworth admitted her to the Mother Baby Unit at Northpark Hospital after her fourth visit.

There she was given the extra support she needed and learnt the basics of motherhood in an environment where she was supported until she joined an occupation plan.

While it took close to three years to get on top of her post-natal depression, Ms Schultz said she credited the

mothers' group as critical.

"We'd only been in Sunbury for four or five months before Angela was born and we had no family here, so there was isolation to begin with," she said.

"So the group became a community for me, where you could bare your soul and feel supported."

Ms Schultz stayed on as a mentor and became a qualified counsellor.

Ms Hollingsworth will facilitate a meeting at the health centre tomorrow in

the hope of reviving the group.

"We had low referrals caused the disbandment and I'd say what caused that was an increase in referrals to private practitioners as well as GPs putting women onto mental health care plans," Ms Hollingsworth said.

"These approaches are valuable in care for women, but I still believe getting women together in a supportive environment is really important too, and if we can come up with another model we'd like to reintroduce it." Details: [97444455](tel:97444455).