

- To:
- NHS trusts and foundation trusts with maternity and neonatal services:
 - chief executives and chairs
 - chief nurses
 - directors and heads of midwifery
 - clinical directors for obstetrics
 - medical directors
 - neonatal leads
 - chief operating officers
 - MNVP chairs
 - maternity and neonatal safety champions
 - ICS/ICB:
 - chief executives and chairs
 - chief operating officers
 - chief nurses
 - medical directors
 - LMNS chairs/leads
 - Regional:
 - directors
 - chief nurses
 - chief midwives
 - medical directors
 - obstetricians
 - directors of specialised commissioning
 - chief operating officers
 - maternity transformation PMO leads
 - Neonatal operational delivery network (ODN) leads
 - Maternity clinical network leads

NHS England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

30 March 2023

Dear colleagues

Delivery Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Services

Today we have published our Three-Year Delivery Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Services in England.

While most women have a positive experience of NHS maternity and neonatal services in England, independent reports show that some families have experienced unacceptable care, trauma and loss, and with incredible bravery have challenged us to improve.

We have listened. Our three-year delivery plan sets out that the NHS will make care safer, more personalised, and more equitable for all women, babies and families.

The delivery plan is directed at frontline staff and leadership, describing the building blocks we need to have in place to ensure the needs of women, babies and families are at the heart of services. It summarises responsibilities for each part of the NHS including trusts, Integrated Care Boards and Systems including Local Maternity and Neonatal Systems and Operational Delivery Networks, and NHS England.

We are grateful to the wide range of people we have heard from to develop this plan: service users, staff providing frontline care, stakeholders, and those leading services. This includes contributions from an Independent Working group chaired by the Royal College of Midwives and Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

This plan aims to deliver change rather than set out new policy. It seeks to help each part of the NHS to plan and prioritise their actions by bringing together learning and action from a range of national reports and plans into one document. Listening to what you had to tell us has informed what we need to do and therefore the four themes of our plan:

1. Listening to, and working with, women and families with compassion.

We want to ensure care is personalised and that service users have informed choice. Voices of all women including those from diverse backgrounds must be heard, and services should work closely with all service users to collaboratively plan, design and improve care.

2. Growing, retaining, and supporting our workforce with the resources and teams they need to excel.

We want to ensure there are sufficient highly-skilled staff across the whole maternity and neonatal team whilst combatting workforce inequalities. Staff should feel valued, with plentiful opportunity for skills and career development to facilitate a lifelong career in the NHS.

3. Developing and sustaining a culture of safety, learning, and support.

There should be a positive safety culture in every maternity and neonatal service, where everyone takes responsibility for safer care and learning, and leaders understand and act based on how it feels for their teams to work at their organisation.

4. Standards and structures that underpin safer, more personalised, and more equitable care.

Best practice should be consistently implemented across the country, with timely, accurate data available to support learning and early identification of emerging safety issues. Women can access their records, and interact with their plans and information to support informed decision-making.

All of this would not be possible without the dedication of maternity and neonatal staff who work tirelessly to support women, babies, and families. Delivering this plan over the next three years will mean putting in place the fundamentals for maternity and neonatal care improvement across England. It will ensure that there is accountability at every level across the system, encourage the effective spread of best practice in maternity and neonatal care, and support the implementation of a cross-system approach to improving care for services users. Trust and ICB Boards will play a critical role working with their maternity and neonatal leaders to improve services, ensuring they have what they need to make care safer, more personalised and more equitable.

We are asking you to work together as maternity and neonatal services to embed and deliver the four themes of this plan. We look forward to working with you to improve care for the benefit of women, families and support maternity and neonatal staff.

Yours sincerely,



Dame Ruth May, DBE
Chief Nursing Officer,
England
NHS England



Sir David Sloman
Chief Operating Officer
NHS England



**Professor Sir Stephen
Powis**
National Medical Director
NHS England