

To: • Trust chief nurses
• Trust directors of midwifery
• Trust COO
• Trust CEO
• Trust medical directors
• Trust clinical directors for obstetrics

NHS England
Wellington House
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cc. • Regional directors
• Regional chief nurses
• Regional medical directors
• Regional chief midwives
• ICB chief nurses
• LMNS Chairs

Dear colleagues

Midwifery Continuity of Carer

We are writing to you to set out essential and immediate changes to the national maternity programme in the light of the continued workforce challenges that maternity services face. There will no longer be a target date for services to deliver Midwifery Continuity of Carer (MCoC) and local services will instead be supported to develop local plans that work for them.

Over the past two years staff have had to work in ways that they never imagined, in difficult circumstances and we know that maternity services are experiencing stress and strain. The top priority for maternity and neonatal services must continue to be ensuring that the right workforce is in place to serve women and babies across England.

At the heart of the MCoC model is the vision that women should have consistent, safe and personalised maternity care, before, during and after the birth. It is a model of care provision that is evidence-based. It can improve the outcomes for most women and babies and especially women of Black, Asian and mixed ethnicity and those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods. This model of care requires appropriate staffing levels to be implemented safely.

There is no longer a national target for MCoC. Local midwifery and obstetric leaders should focus on retention and growth of the workforce, and develop plans that will work locally taking account of local populations, current staffing, more specialised models of care required by some women and current ways of working supporting the whole maternity team to work to their strengths. We hope this will enable your services to improve in line with the evidence, at a pace that is right.

We know trusts have submitted their MCoC plans and will have considered safe staffing levels in submitting their plans. Thank you for your work on these and your efforts to implement MCoC to date

We expect you to continue to review your staffing in the context of Donna Ockenden's final report. Your local LMNS, regional and national colleagues are here to support you with this including how to focus MCoC on those women from vulnerable groups who will benefit the most from this care.

As we have said previously:

1. Trusts that can demonstrate staffing meets safe minimum requirements can continue existing MCoC provision and continue to roll out, subject to ongoing minimum staffing requirements being met for any expansion of MCoC provision.
2. Trusts that cannot meet safe minimum staffing requirements for further roll out of MCoC, but can meet the safe minimum staffing requirements for existing MCoC provision, should cease further roll out and continue to support at the current level of provision or only provide services to existing women on MCoC pathways and suspend new women being booked into MCoC provision.
3. Trusts that cannot meet safe minimum staffing requirements for further roll out of MCoC and for existing MCoC provision, should immediately suspend existing MCoC provision and ensure women are safely transferred to alternative maternity pathways of care, taking into consideration their individual needs; and any midwives in MCoC teams should be safely supported into other areas of maternity provision.

Trusts are not expected to deliver against a target level of MCoC, and this will remain in place until maternity services in England can demonstrate sufficient staffing levels to do so.

Approved educational institutions (AEI's) educating pre-registration midwifery students will continue the implementation of the future midwifery standards of the NMC. It is

expected that midwifery students will be taught the MCoC model, alongside other approaches to safe, high-quality care for women. The NMC has written to education providers to confirm that this remains a requirement of registration and to suggest how this can be achieved when students are placed in those organisations that are not able to fully implement MCoC at this time. Where this is the case, students will still benefit from practice supervisors and assessors being able to explain and discuss the concept and we would ask for your support to encourage this to happen.

With the advice of the independent working group established after the final Ockenden report, we will publish a national delivery plan for maternity services this winter which will bring together actions for maternity services, including next steps for improving continuity across all professional groups.

Yours sincerely,



Dame Ruth May
Chief Nursing Officer,
England



Prof Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent OBE
Chief Midwifery Officer
National Maternity Safety
Champion
NHS England



Dr Matthew Jolly
National Clinical Director for
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