

Taskforce set up to deliver urgent action on maternity

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Members confirmed for new Maternity and Neonatal taskforce chaired by the Health and Social Care Secretary to deliver improvements on maternity

- Taskforce will act on the recommendations of Baroness Amos' review due this June
- Experts including families chosen to lead taskforce and deliver safer, more equitable care for women, babies and families
- £25 million boost for Trusts to tackle causes of maternal death, enhance bereavement facilities and improve triage services

Women, babies and families will receive safer and higher-quality NHS care through a new Maternity and Neonatal taskforce chaired by the Health and Social Care Secretary.

The government has finalised the membership of the taskforce, which will tackle deep-rooted inequalities and deliver urgent action on the recommendations of the independent national investigation into maternity and neonatal services in England, led by Baroness Amos.

The expert panel includes families, senior NHS leaders, royal colleges, campaigners, academics, and third sector representatives who collectively have the clinical expertise, lived experience and sector know-how to deliver the changes so desperately needed for families.

As part of the selection process, the government has been working closely with harmed and bereaved families to ensure their personal experiences were reflected.

Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care said:

I ordered an independent national investigation into NHS maternity and neonatal services to make sure families harmed by maternity care get the truth and accountability they deserve.

Baroness Amos will deliver on this vital work this June but to deliver truly meaningful change — so that other families do not face the ordeals too many are already enduring — we must be ready to act swiftly.

This 17-strong taskforce will start work straight away, so we will be ready to drive improvement from the moment the investigation's recommendations are published.

At the same time, we're continuing to invest millions in schemes that are working to deliver safer and more equitable maternity care to benefit families today.

The news comes as a further £25 million boost has been unlocked for NHS Trusts to tackle the leading causes of maternal death, enhance their bereavement facilities and improve triage services for women who experience unexpected complications during their pregnancy.

NHS Trusts are already rolling out the Maternal Care Bundle - best practice standards across five

areas of care that tackle the leading causes of maternal death epilepsy, haemorrhage and mental health. To enable Trusts to implement the Bundle by the end of this year, a further £5 million will be invested to support the roll out.

While the vast majority of the 10,000 babies that are delivered by the NHS every week are done so safely, that's not the case for every family.

For those who go through the tragedy of baby loss, compassionate and caring environments are crucial to support families with privacy, empathy and specialised support. Investing £9 million funding across 40 Trusts will allow them to enhance their bereavement facilities, to ensure bereaved families have the appropriate, high-quality spaces to help begin to process their loss.

For pregnant women and new mum's who experience unexpected complications or have concerns, maternity triage services are the crucial front door to the NHS where they will be assessed for the appropriate follow up support and care, which can be lifesaving. A further £11m investment has been unlocked for Trusts to improve these services, including purchasing new equipment and repurposing existing NHS spaces and facilities to better support these assessments.

The Secretary of State will chair regular roundtables with the new taskforce - starting next week - with the first priority to agree its Terms of Reference and to hear from Baroness Amos on her interim findings.

The taskforce will also address recent developments in maternity and neonatal care, including recommendations from the Thirlwall Inquiry and the independent review into maternity services at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust.

To set it up, careful consideration has been given to ensuring a diversity of experience, region and discipline - including those who can speak to inequalities in maternal health. The taskforce will also be supported by a wider range of experts, as part of 'expert reference groups' that will bring a broader range of perspectives.

Helen Gittos, Taskforce family representative and Chair of Family expert reference group said: >No one can be in any doubt about the scale and seriousness of the problems in maternity services. I look forward to working with Wes Streeting to ensure that the changes that are so urgently needed are properly implemented. > >I hope the professional bodies concerned will come together to bravely, boldly and decisively take the decisions that will create services that women can trust.

Duncan Burton, Chief Nursing Officer for England, said: "Every woman and baby deserve safe, compassionate care during pregnancy and birth, and the very best start in life.

Although NHS maternity and neonatal teams work incredibly hard to support women and families every day, we know there is more we must urgently do to improve care and experience.

I look forward to working with members of the taskforce to improve safety and deliver the best possible outcomes and experience for women, babies, families and colleagues working in these services.

The taskforce members include:

- Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Chair)

- Baroness Merron, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women's Health and Mental Health (Deputy Chair and Chair of the Regulators and Investigatory Bodies Expert Reference Group)
- Duncan Burton, Chief Nursing Officer for England (Senior Responsible Officer for Maternity)
- Helen Gittos, Family Representative (Chair of Family Expert Reference Group)
- Gary Andrews, Family Representative (Chair of Family Expert Reference Group)
- Cathy Brewster, Family Representative (Chair of Family Expert Reference Group)
- Lauren Caulfield, Family Representative (Health Equity Expert Reference Group lived experience representative)
- Habib Naqvi, Chief Executive of the NHS Race and Health Observatory (Chair of the Health Equity Expert Reference Group)
- Nina Johns, Consultant obstetrician and Clinical Director at The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust (Co-chair of Workforce, Clinical and Academic Expert Reference Group)
- Helen Cheyne, Professor of Maternal and Child Health Research at the University of Stirling and Professor of Midwifery at the Royal College of Midwives (Scotland) (Co-chair of Workforce, Clinical and Academic Expert Reference Group)
- Avey Bhatia, Chief Nurse at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, co-lead on Patient Safety and Clinical Governance (Senior Health System representative)
- Louise Stead, CEO of Ashford and St Peter's and Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trusts (Senior Health System representative)
- Gill Walton, Chief Executive of the Royal College of Midwives
- Alison Wright, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- Representative of The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health/British Association of Perinatal Medicine - to be confirmed
- Clea Harmer, Chief Executive of Sands (Chair of Charity and Third Sector Expert Reference Group)
- Helene Normann, Senior advisor and Chief Midwifery Officer at the Norwegian Directorate of Health (International Expert)

Following the publication of the investigation's recommendations, the taskforce's membership may be further refined, to ensure it is best equipped to achieve and act on the recommendations from Baroness Amos – due in June.

Since July 2024, this government has taken significant action to improve maternity care, including:

- Investing over £149 million to address critical safety risks on the maternity and neonatal estate, enabling better care for mothers and their newborns.
- Piloting Martha's Rule in maternity and neonatal units in 14 trusts across 6 regions to give patients and families the right to request a second opinion.
- Introducing a Perinatal Culture and Leadership Programme to develop a culture of safety, learning, and support for leads from all maternity and neonatal units.
- Creating targeted schemes to promote midwife retention, and the Graduate Guarantee, so that every qualified nurse and midwife in England can apply to join the health workforce – since December 2024, we've recruited an extra 802 midwives. As of December 2025, there are 30,930 midwives working in the NHS which equates to 25,459 full time equivalent midwives.
- Rolling out guidance across the NHS to tackle the leading causes of maternal death including thrombosis, mental health, epilepsy and haemorrhage.
- Launching an anti-discrimination programme, delivered by NHS Race and Health Observatory, and a system to better identify safety concerns

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/taskforce-set-up-to-deliver-urgent-action-on-maternity>