

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

National Review of Maternity Services 2019-20

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

In its 2019-20 operational plan, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) committed to a programme of national reviews which included maternity services. Our decision to undertake this review was based on a number of concerns relating to the pressures around maternity services in Wales, including the issues identified during HIW's inspection of maternity services in the Royal Glamorgan Hospital in the former Cwm Taf University Health Board in October 2018¹.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Royal College of Midwives were commissioned by Welsh Government in October 2018 to carry out an independent review of the patient care provided by the former Cwm Taf University Health Board². This followed serious concerns that initially came to light as a consequence of the under reporting of serious incidents in maternity services. The report published in April 2019 raised a number of significant concerns around staffing, processes and the underlying culture in maternity services which have compromised care. This resulted in the maternity services in the health board being placed in special measures in April 2019.

Following its publication and given the seriousness of this situation, the Minister for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething MS, required health boards to consider their own services in the context of the recommendations of the report and to provide immediate assurances in this regard.

Welsh Government is working with heads of midwifery, clinical directors and user led maternity service liaison committees to ensure that the learning from this report informs the actions for Wales in the development of a new five year vision for maternity services³.

In April 2017, under a new model for clinical supervision, the health boards took responsibility for the supervision of midwives practicing in Wales (previously undertaken by the Local Supervising Authority for Midwives). Since this change,

¹ <http://hiw.org.uk/docs/hiw/inspectionreports/210119royalglamorganmaternityen.pdf>

² Since 1 April 2019, Cwm Taf University Health Board became Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board following the incorporation of the Bridgend area within the health board.

³ <https://gov.wales/written-statement-publication-maternity-care-wales-5-year-vision-future>

supervision of midwives has been managed by health boards at a local level rather than nationally. Therefore, an independent review of maternity services was thought to be timely.

HIW's review will provide a national picture of the quality and safety of NHS maternity services across Wales. This work will provide public assurance and help to improve services for women and their families. The review commenced with phase one in June 2019 and following on from this work phase two will be scoped and planned. Further details of the phases are detailed within this document.

Progress

We will be publishing Phase I of our National Review of Maternity Services during November 2020. This report will focus on the key themes and messages to have emerged from the [Terms of Reference](#).

- The extensive programme of inspections of maternity units across Wales
- Our national maternity survey developed alongside the Community Health Councils
- Our staff survey of those working in maternity services in Wales
- Interviews with key personnel from each health board, focusing on the quality, safety and governance of maternity services

Further planned activity

Phase I of the review also identified some issues in relation to aspects of maternity care that were outside the original scope of the national review. Consequently, we feel there is value in focusing our attention on developing a further understanding of these specific issues during Phase II. These key areas to focus upon relate to:

- Antenatal Care - to consider the quality of care provided by community midwifery teams
- Postnatal Care - to consider the period after the birth and up to the stage of Health Visitor engagement
- Follow-up on some of the inspections undertaken as part of Phase I, to understand what progress is being made

Phase II will seek again to explore in relation to the above:

- The experiences of women, their partners and families.

It will also explore the extent to which health boards across Wales:

- Provide safe and effective maternity services
- Understand the strengths and areas for improvement within their community maternity services.

Approach and Methodology

The antenatal and postnatal period during pregnancy and following the birth are important times for both the mother and the baby, and at times can be complex. For phase II, we will gather intelligence and review antenatal and postnatal services across Wales. We will listen to the accounts of women, their partners and families to gain further insight, and understand their experience of using services.

To inform phase II, we will review the information and evidence obtained through our work to date. In addition, follow-up assurance work will be undertaken for a selection of inspections undertaken during phase I of our review, in order to determine completion or progress of actions in line with recommendations made during inspection. To obtain this assurance, we may be required to undertake some onsite follow-up inspection activity. Decisions to undertake these inspections will be subject to risk assessment and intelligence, in view of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

In undertaking phase II, we will consider:

- A range of information and data regarding antenatal and postnatal maternity services across Wales, including any concerns intelligence held by HIW and the Welsh Government
- Information provided by each health board regarding community maternity services
- Evidence obtained during phase I fieldwork, along with both public and staff surveys
- Information obtained through various data collection methods including attending antenatal and postnatal classes and holding focus groups on themes such as antenatal classes, breast feeding support groups and mother and baby groups.

Working with others

HIW will continue to work with a range of stakeholders, including the Community Health Councils and third sector organisations, in order to engage with women, their partners and families to understand their experiences of maternity services across the communities of Wales.

HIW will liaise with these stakeholders at key intervals throughout the review to share plans and ensure any joint working opportunities are explored to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts and to share findings following completion of fieldwork.

Planning and Timescales

It is our intention at this stage to conduct phase II of the national review between November 2020 and March 2021, with a view to reporting our findings by summer

2021. We are aware that these timescales may be contingent upon the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and winter pressures.

Reporting

We hope to produce a final National Maternity Review report by summer 2021. This will be a single report capturing the findings of phase II, and progress made by services since phase I.

A dedicated webpage for the maternity review will continue to be publicised on HIW's website, sharing updates on the key findings from the review. Following the publication of the final national report, follow-up activity will be considered and a Welsh Government learning event will also take place in December 2020.

Out of Scope

We have noted a number of areas during the national review which may warrant further examination in the future. However, it is not possible to include them within the scope of this review:

- Obstetric theatre environment, procedures and pre-assessment
- Neo-natal care.