



**MORE MIDWIVES**

# The resolution

*'There are chronic shortages of midwives. The NFWI calls on the government to increase investment in the training, employment, and retention of midwives in England and Wales to ensure services are adequately resourced and are able to deliver a high standard of care.'*

– Horwich WI, Lancashire Federation

# Why the WI took action

In 2012, a WI member- who is also a midwife- proposed a resolution calling for increased investment in midwifery services and maternity care. From her experiences on the frontline of maternity care, she saw that staff shortages and a lack of sustained investment in services meant that women and their babies

were being let down every day. She urged delegates at the 2012 Annual Meeting to support the resolution and join together to press the Government for change. With a 96% majority, members voted to pass the resolution which called for an end to the shortage of midwives.



Andy Lane

NFWI Annual Meeting, 2012

# The scale of the problem

In 2011, the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) estimated that in England alone there was a shortage of 5,000 midwives.



In Wales, 2011 was the third year in a row which saw the number of midwives in the NHS fall. In 2011, there were 12% fewer midwives than in 2008.



Research from the NCT published in 2010 found that 42% of first-time mothers in England and Wales felt there were not enough midwives available to help them in hospital after the birth of their baby.

# Key developments during the WI's campaign for More Midwives

**April 2013:**

NFWI-Wales presents the Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary with a petition in support of more midwives signed by 1,532 WI members.

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**May 2013:**

Working with NCT, the NFWI publishes a major report examining the experiences of 5,500 women who gave birth in England or Wales between 2007 and 2012.

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**October 2013:**

The NFWI meets with the then Minister of Health and presents a petition signed by 30,000 WI members demanding action for more midwives.

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**February 2014:**

The NFWI contributes evidence to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) consultation on the first-ever safe staffing guidance for midwifery settings.

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**October 2014:**

In conjunction with the RCM, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) and baby charity Bliss, the NFWI hosts breakfast briefing events at Labour and Conservative party conferences to discuss the findings of our research and push for increased investment in maternity services.

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**October 2014:**

The NFWI meets with the Chief Executive of NHS England to discuss the campaign.



*Marylyn Haines Evans, then Chair of the NFWI's Public Affairs Committee, meeting with Dr Dan Poulter, Health Minister at the time*

**February 2015:**

NICE publishes the first ever guidance for safe staffing in maternity settings.

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**May 2015:**

The NFWI publishes a historical overview of WI members' experiences of maternity care since the 1950s.

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**February 2016:**

NHS England publishes its National Maternity Review, citing NFWI research. The review also highlighted the importance of personalised care and continuity of carer, reflecting some of the NFWI's key recommendations set out in *Support Overdue*.

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**June 2016:**

The NFWI contributes evidence to the Health Select Committee's maternity services inquiry.

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**January 2017:**

The NFWI contributes supplementary evidence to the Health Select Committee for their second hearing on the implementation of the National Maternity Review. WI members take part in a letter writing action, encouraging their MPs to share *Support Overdue* with the Department of Health.

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**January 2017:**

The NFWI publishes its second report into women's experiences of maternity services. *Support Overdue* (2017) found widespread, clinically unsafe conditions in labour wards across the country.

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**March 2017:**

The Welsh Government announces that it has taken up the recommendation of the NFWI's 2017 report to prioritise maternity staff planning.

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**March 2018:**

The NFWI welcomes the government's announcement that it will create 3,000 new training places for midwives in England over the next four years.

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**January 2019:**

As part of the NHS Long-Term Plan, NHS England announces that newly qualified midwives will be offered a five-year job guarantee.

# Highlights



Then Chair of the NFWI, Ruth Bond, appeared on BBC Breakfast to talk about the campaign



Members of Bawtry WI, Yorkshire South Federation, held a day of action at Bawtry Community Library



Members of Suffolk West Federation met with the former MP for South Suffolk, Tim Yeo, to discuss the issue of midwife numbers



Northamptonshire Federation organised a 'Pram Push' in Abington Park, Northampton, to celebrate midwives and midwifery services



Nicola Hatch-Lighterness from The Brentwood Belles WI, Essex Federation, spoke to Sky News about her experience of maternity care and the findings of *Support Overdue* (2017)

# Where do we stand now?

The number of midwives employed in the NHS has slowly increased in recent years. In Wales, there are now 129 more full-time midwives than there were in 2009. In England, this number is up by 2,123 since 2010.

Research also suggests that certain aspects of maternity care have improved. Findings from the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) 2018 survey of women's experiences in England, for example, showed that 68% said they were asked how they felt emotionally during their antenatal care, compared with 57% in 2015. And 71% said that during their stay in hospital their partner or someone close to them could stay with them as much as they wanted, compared with 63% in 2015. In Wales, positive aspects of maternity care were highlighted by the results of the 2017 *Your Birth – We Care* survey which examined the views of almost 4,000 women across the country. Most, for instance, said they saw their named midwife either for all or most of their antenatal appointments and, on the whole, respondents found these appointments to be reassuring and generally positive. Further, in 2017/18 the Welsh Government increased the number of training places for student midwives by

40% to 134.

These are all steps in the right direction, but there is still cause for concern.

England is still missing 3,500 midwives, and while continuity of care has been shown to lead to better clinical outcomes for women and their babies, the CQC found that most women (85%) are not cared for by the same midwife during pregnancy, labour and birth. Shortfalls in care were identified in several other areas including in relation to birthplace options, postnatal contact and the level of knowledge held by midwives about the respondent's medical history. Similarly in Wales, maternity services are not yet meeting the needs and expectations of many women, with some receiving little or biased information on their birthplace choices according to the *Your Birth – We Care* survey. In addition, the findings of the Perinatal Mental Health in Wales project (published in 2018) found that access to specialist perinatal mental health care remains inconsistent across health boards.

These findings reflect a worrying continuation of some of the key problems in maternity care highlighted by the NFWI's

second *Support Overdue* report, published in January 2017. The report, which examined the experiences of almost 2,500 women who gave birth in 2014, 2015 and 2016, found that:

88% of women had never met any of the midwives who looked after them during labour/birth



18% of women did not see a midwife as often as they required postnatally



15% of women were told where they had to have their baby, despite their preferences



## THE MATERNITY TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME IN ENGLAND: AN UPDATE

The Maternity Transformation Programme was established to implement the recommendations of the 2016 National Maternity Review report - *Better Births* - which set out a vision to improve women's experiences of care, and the quality and outcomes of services. Since the publication of the NFWI's second *Support Overdue* report, 44 Local Maternity Systems (LMS), which bring together providers and commissioners, have been created. As set out in *Better Births*, their purpose is to ensure that "women, babies and families are able to access the services they need and choose, in the community, as close to home as possible". In partnership with local service users, each LMS has now developed a Local Maternity

Transformation Plan that demonstrates how, by the end of 2020/21, they will ensure that:

- All pregnant women have a personalised care plan.
- All women are able to make choices about their maternity care, during pregnancy, birth and postnatally.
- Most women receive continuity of the person caring for them during pregnancy, birth and postnatally.
- More women are able to give birth in midwifery settings.

# How you and your WI can take the campaign forward



**1. Join your local Maternity Service Liaison Committee (MSLC) in Wales or Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP) in England.** With the aim of monitoring and improving local maternity care, these groups bring together commissioners, healthcare professionals and service users who have had a baby recently or are expecting. By getting involved with your local group and sharing your experiences, you can help ensure that decisions regarding maternity care in your area take into account the views of parents and reflect local needs. For details on how to find and contact your nearest MSLC or MVP visit your local hospital's or trust's website.

**2. Say 'thank you' to your local midwives.** One of the key findings from Support Overdue was that due to staffing shortages, midwives are chronically over-worked, often rushing from one patient to the next all day long. As a gesture of gratitude and support why not organise a craft night in your WI to write or craft thank you notes to the midwives in your area? Such a small gesture would go a long way to making your local midwives feel valued. Why not link this with International Day of the Midwife which takes place in May each year?



**3. Share your experiences of maternity care with the CQC or Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW).** As the independent regulator of health and social care in England, the CQC is responsible for making sure that people receive high-quality care. Letting the CQC know about any concerns you have about your care or that of a loved one helps to make sure that others don't face the same experience. Research published by the regulator to mark the launch of its 'Declare Your Care' campaign in February 2019, however, showed that almost 7 million people who have recently used health and social care services had concerns about their care, but didn't raise them. If you'd like to tell the CQC about your care visit: [www.cqc.org.uk/help-advice/your-stories/declare-your-care](http://www.cqc.org.uk/help-advice/your-stories/declare-your-care)

If you live in Wales, you might want to contact HIW (the independent inspectorate and regulator of healthcare in Wales). Like the CQC, HIW's role is to inspect the quality, safety and effectiveness of NHS services. To provide feedback about a service you've used, visit the 'contact us' page on the HIW website.

It's important to note that both the CQC and HIW are unable to investigate complaints on your behalf, but you are entitled to raise your concerns with the service provider who will have their own complaints procedure. For further information, visit the CQC or HIW website.

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