**Press Release**

**Embargoed until 00.01 Tuesday, 17th January 2017**

**WI/NCT maternity report should be red flag event for Government say midwives**

Today (Tuesday, 17th January 2017) theNational Federation of Women’s Institutes (NFWI) and the NCT have published a report, saying that dangerously low staffing levels mean that half of women (50%) experience at least one red-flag event during childbirth.

Commenting on the report, Louise Silverton, Director for Midwifery at the Royal College of Midwives, said: “This is an important report because it is women telling us about their experiences of maternity care.

“There is indeed much to celebrate about our maternity services, not least the dedication and commitment of the staff. However, this report highlights in stark detail how much pressure our midwives and maternity services are under.

“The fact that half of women have experienced a red flag event is hugely worrying. It is a sign of services under too much pressure, with too few resources and not enough staff.

“This ongoing shortage of midwives and underfunding of services is not delivering the service that women and their families need, and it is storing up health problems for the future that could be prevented.

“So many of the issues that are besetting our services feature heavily in this report, including the long-standing and serious midwife shortage and  the lack of choice. Inadequate postnatal care also remains an issue. This report shows that women are not receiving the postnatal care they need with many having to seek help from an already stretched GP and A and E services.

“This lack of consideration of maternity services is highlighted in the NHS Sustainably and Transformation Plans (STPs). As RCM analysis recently found, many of the STPs make only passing mention of maternity services, if they are mentioned at all. This is not good enough.

“Serious and sustained investment in maternity care is needed to counter the huge increase in births over the last decade or more, the increasing demands on the service and the historical lack of funding.

“Midwives and maternity staff deserve more investment in maternity, and most importantly women who are at the centre of care deserve it also. This report should be a red flag event for this Government, who should be doing their utmost to stop these red flag events for women and their families.”

To contact the RCM Press Office call 020 7312 3456 or email pressofficer@rcm.org.uk. For a copy of the report please contact Charlotte Fiander, at the NFWI – c.fiander@nfwi.org.uk / 020 7371 9300 or Martin Chapman at the NCT – martin.chapman@nct.org.uk / 020 8752 2412.

**Ends**

**Notes to editors**

The RCM is the only trade union and professional association dedicated to serving midwifery and the whole midwifery team. We provide workplace advice and support, professional and clinical guidance and information, and learning opportunities with our broad range of events, conferences and online resources. For more information visit the RCM website at <https://www.rcm.org.uk/>.