

Tackling inequalities in maternity care: NHS Providers' call for bold action

21 May 2025  Rebecca Coe

The government has previously set out its [Plan for Change](#) and [New NHS programme to reduce brain injury in childbirth](#) to improve maternity safety.

NHS Providers has now published its findings [Bold action: tackling inequalities in maternity care](#) which set out insights from 16 NHS Trust leaders' perspective as to what is required on the frontline to enable change and improvement.

Trust leaders call for "*bold action*" and commitment to adequate continued funding and resource.

While many women experience safe, high-quality maternity care, variation in outcomes remains a concern. Data continues to show that women from Black and other racially minoritised backgrounds, as well as those living in areas of higher deprivation, face disproportionately higher risks during pregnancy and childbirth. These differences underscore the need for continued, focused efforts to ensure maternity care is equitable and responsive to the needs of all communities.

The call for action

Trust leaders identified action required in nine key areas:

- **Access improvements:** Enhance language services by providing national guidance and a framework for language and translation services in maternity services, including recognition of the specific need for out-of-hours provision. Target funding to reduce access inequalities.
- **Continuity of care:** Update the national policy on continuity of care to prioritise continuity of carer, focusing on high-risk women.
- **Workforce and culture:** Innovate in recruitment and retention to close staffing and skills gaps (for example, consideration of alternative routes to midwifery training), increasing diversity and training.
- **Race equality:** Implement standardised training and practices to tackle racism and bias.
- **Community co-production:** Support sustainable funding for community partnerships and policy co-production such as the Maternity and Neonatal Voice Partnerships (MNVPs) which are a positive resource to engage women, enabling them to have a say in the development and delivery of maternity care.
- **Funding and resource:** Ensure maternity services are prioritised and adequately funded to enable both effective operational delivery and to implement long-term transformational improvements.
- **Reporting burden:** Streamline maternity reporting requirements, to better enable meaningful action to reduce inequalities and improve quality of care.
- **Data:** Streamline data processes and improve ethnicity data recording and usage.
- **Preventive pathways:** Upstream focus to bring system and local partners together to prioritise prevention including improved integration 999 and 111 emergency call referral pathways.

Conclusion

As work continues across England to reduce variation in outcomes and improve maternity safety, reports like this help shape a more coordinated and informed approach - one that reflects both the realities on the ground and the collective ambition for equity in care.

We are committed to assisting NHS Resolution, NHS Trusts and other healthcare organisations with delivering on their strategy to improve maternity outcomes. Please do get in touch to discuss how we may be able to help your organisation.

Browne Jacobson's [Maternity Resources Hub](#) also provides resources and information about our specialist team and includes our contact details.

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