


Improving maternity care for recent migrant women with language barriers

03 February 2025  Karen Gilhooley

The sixth perinatal enquiry carried out as part of the MBRRACE-UK programme of work investigates the quality of care provision for women who are recent migrants with language barriers and whose pregnancy ends in still birth or neonatal death.

Publication of this report offers insights into where improvements can be made in the care offered to this group. At a local Trust level and nationally this provides an opportunity to reflect and act upon areas of potential improvement in maternity services.

Summary of the enquiry and findings

This enquiry looked at the care provided to 25 women and concluded that services did not meet the needs of these women effectively. Only 1 of the women received care which was deemed to be 'good' where no improvements in care were identified. For 7 women, improvements in care were identified but it was considered this would not have altered the outcome. The remaining 17 women had improvements in care identified which may have made a difference to outcome (either to mother or baby or both).

Key findings include:

- Almost all the women had a documented need for an interpreter, but only 27% of the 589 separate contacts with healthcare professionals took place with a documented professional interpreter.
- 24% who booked their pregnancy received antenatal care in line with national guidance.
- 59% of women whose baby died received documented bereavement care in the community.

This [infographic](#) provides a useful and striking summary of the findings.

Improving care and outcomes in this group

- The findings conclude that enhancing the availability and provision of professional interpreting services and targeted advocacy is crucial to improving care for this group of vulnerable women.
- The report further comments on the lack of robust real time risk assessment to capture the intricacies of maternal care for this group of vulnerable women. This might ideally be done at a tailored initial assessment appointment and as part of a specific pathway for this group.
- Lack of evidence is noted on issues such as barriers to the use of interpreter services and how best to support this group to access maternity and the wider healthcare services. The report recommends prioritisation of research to explore this.
- Interventions to address these issues can be designed alongside/ as part of such research.
- Many recommendations from the previous confidential enquiry remain relevant. A women centred approach to navigating NHS maternity care is essential, ensuring these women can fully access and utilise the available services. Additionally, staff training should focus on better understanding their vulnerabilities and needs, enabling more effective support in navigating the healthcare system.

We anticipate the valuable insights from this report will facilitate reflection learning and improvement across NHS maternity services, contributing to a safer environment for this vulnerable group of mothers and babies.

[The full report can be accessed here](#) →

Our specialist maternity team

At Browne Jacobson, we are committed to supporting NHS Trusts and health care organisations with delivering on their strategy to improve maternity outcomes. Please do get in touch to discuss how our specialist maternity team may be able to help.

For more resources and to learn about our specialist team, visit our [maternity resources hub](#).

Key contact



Karen Gilhooley

Associate

karen.gilhooley@brownejacobson.com

+44 (0)330 045 1268

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