



The Royal College of Midwives
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The Royal College of Midwives' response to *Future Delivery of Support to Victims and their Children in Accommodation-Based Domestic Abuse Services*, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) is the professional organisation and trade union that represents the vast majority of practising midwives in the UK. It is the only such organisation run by midwives for midwives. The RCM is the voice of midwifery, providing excellence in professional leadership, representation, education and influence for and on behalf of midwives. We actively support and campaign for improvements to maternity services and provide professional leadership for one of the most established clinical disciplines.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. We have only a few comments to make so will do that in the body of this email rather than your online survey for ease.

- We agree that national guidelines and principles to inform a local response in the form of Local Partnership Boards is a good approach.
- We applaud the efforts to make accommodation-based services as inclusive as possible. We would like accommodation services and Local Partnership Boards to note that maternity and pregnancy is also a protected characteristic under the 2010 Equality Act. We would like the national standardised needs assessment form to include provision for victims and survivors of VAWG who have this particular protected characteristic.
- Pregnancy and new motherhood is a risk factor for domestic abuse, with perpetrators of abuse beginning or escalating their abuse during this time. Domestic abuse is a significant cause of maternal morbidity and mortality. The latest [research](#) into maternal mortality in the UK has found of all the women who died in 2014-16 during or up to six weeks after the end of pregnancy, 8% had a known history of domestic abuse. In almost a quarter of maternal deaths caused by suicide, the woman had a known history of being a victim of domestic abuse.
- 14 maternal deaths during 2014-16 were murders. 10 women died during pregnancy or up to six weeks after pregnancy, and four in the period from six weeks to a year after the pregnancy. All 14 were killed by a partner or former partner.
- 2 per cent of all maternal deaths in the period from 6 weeks to one year after the end of pregnancy in 2014-16 were caused by homicide. The Secretary of State has a national ambition to halve maternal mortality in England by 2025 and the RCM believes keeping

women safe from perpetrators of domestic abuse has a part to play in realising this ambition.

- [Research has found](#) domestic violence can result in unexplained maternal bleeding, placental abruption, preterm labour and birth, fetal injuries or stillbirths. As well as the direct detrimental effects of repeated violence in pregnancy, abused women may be prevented by their partners from seeking or receiving proper antenatal or postnatal care.
- Midwives are required by clinical guidance to ask women about domestic abuse they may be experiencing and to refer appropriately. Safeguarding midwives are routinely part of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC).
- As such, we think a good addition to the representatives set out for Local Partnership Boards would be a representative from the Local Maternity System. 44 LMSs have been created across England as part of the NHS England Maternity Transformation Programme. LMSs bring together commissioners and providers to plan maternity services across a wide geographical region. They would bring an important perspective to Local Partnership Boards, helping them to better understand the needs of perinatal women who are a key VAWG victim/survivor group.

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