

## **RE: Redeployment of maternity staff during pandemic**

We appreciate that we are writing to you at a time when Trusts and Boards across the country are under a significant amount of strain. The next few weeks will be enormously difficult and having healthcare professionals ready and able to support beyond their normal duties is an important feature of ensuring safe care for patients during this crisis.

However, we urge you to only consider the redeployment of your maternity workforce as a last resort. As you know, maternity services are like emergency medicine in their acute and unpredictable nature, and this is a specialty where demand remains unchanged regardless of the pressures of the pandemic. Maternity services cannot draw on healthcare professionals from other areas of the hospital should there be a sudden surge or requirement for additional staff, given the specialist skills associated with maternity care.

It is essential to have in place a sufficiently skilled and supported workforce across maternity to ensure the safety of mothers and their babies. This is even more important now, given that maternity services across the UK are understaffed, and in England are undertaking a reorganisation of care in response to the interim Ockenden report.

We absolutely appreciate the need to redeploy staff where necessary, and indeed many gynaecologists have, and will, be deployed to other areas of the hospital – although we would hope, where possible, that gynaecologists might first be considered to support obstetric units experiencing difficulties given their prior training and experience.

The RCOG and the RCM recommend that any decision to move staff out of maternity services must come with a commitment to regularly review staffing both inside and outside of maternity services and with a view to returning maternity staff as soon as possible. We would be grateful if you could share this communication with your medical director, and others who are planning workforce supply.

With best wishes,



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