

**RCM survey of midwives and
MSWs in England**

**overworked
and underpaid**



Royal College
of Midwives

The maternity staffing crisis in numbers



100,000

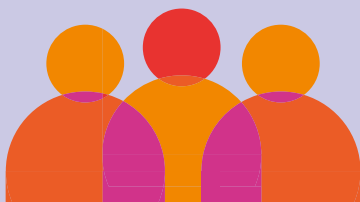
Midwives are working 100,000 unpaid hours a week to support maternity services in England.



88%
of respondents
worked additional
unpaid hours



74%
of respondents often or
always faced unrealistic time
pressures and workloads



87%
of respondents did not feel
their workplace had safe
staffing levels



26%
of respondents
worked more than
five additional
unpaid hours



Introduction

It's broadly acknowledged that the NHS is experiencing a workforce crisis, and nowhere is this more chronic than in maternity services. Current Royal College of Midwives (RCM) estimates place the shortage of midwives in England alone at 2,500. This is not simply a paper exercise. The impact of staff shortages has been cited in numerous reports on maternity safety, including recent CQC inspections and the 2022 Ockenden Review into maternity services at Shrewsbury & Telford Hospitals NHS Trust. The impact is also felt by midwives and maternity support workers on a daily basis, as evidenced by this latest survey of RCM members of their experience of one week in March¹.

What needs to happen now

Government inaction has led us to this crisis. Despite acknowledgement by the then Chair of the House of Commons Health & Social Care Select Committee that there is a chronic shortage of midwives and that the shortage jeopardises the quality and safety of care, little has been done to address it.

That same Select Committee Chair is now Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, who has it within his gift to ensure that the NHS has the right resources. We recognise there is no quick fix, but there are actions which could be taken now to stem the tide of midwives and maternity support workers leaving the NHS and to ensure women and families receive safe, good quality care. In particular, the RCM wants to see:

- Urgent investment in maternity services and a fully-funded long term workforce plan for the NHS that addresses the current crisis
- Action to retain maternity staff by actively supporting flexible working, career progression and valuing their contribution fairly, through pay and conditions.
- An end to toxic workplace cultures, by effective action to tackle bullying, discrimination and harassment.

1. RCM members in England were asked to log their experiences at work from 1 to 8 March, and to submit them to the RCM by 20 March.





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