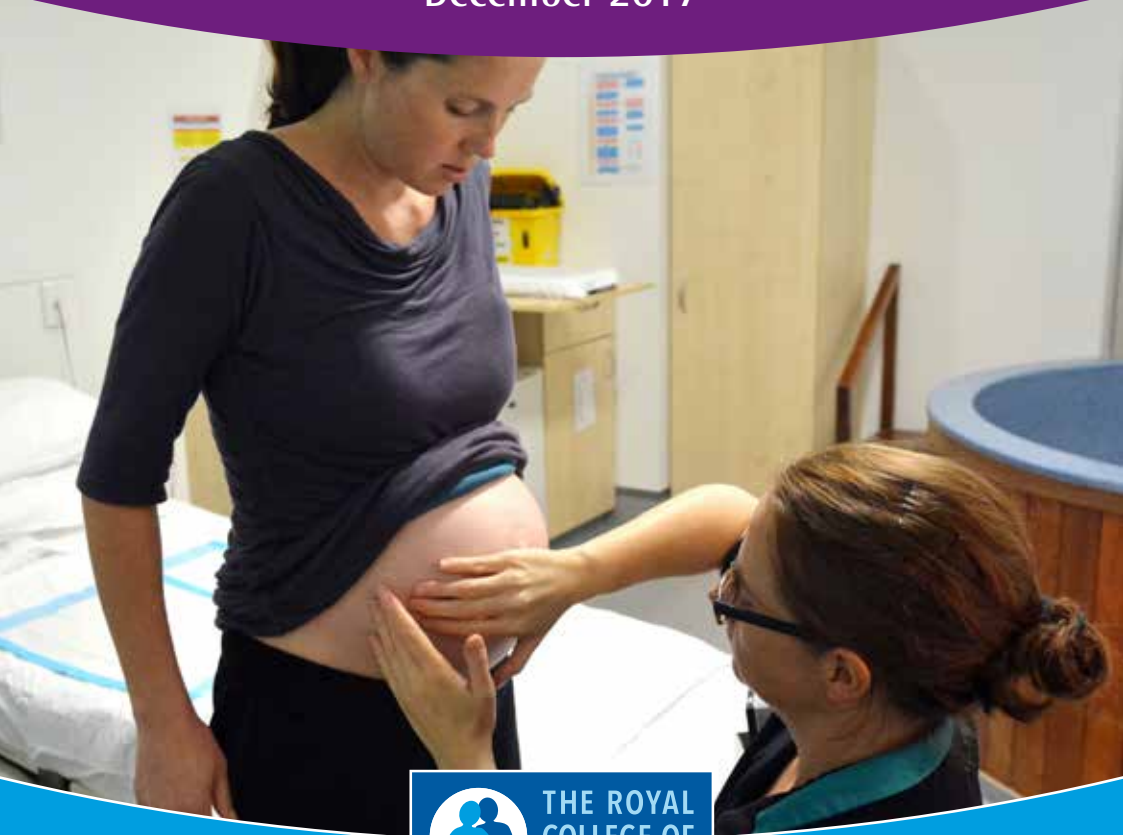


Evaluation of the RCM's Caring for You Campaign

Findings of the RCM's Survey of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of Midwives and Maternity Support Workers

December 2017



Promoting · Supporting · Influencing

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Foreword

The RCM launched its 'Caring for You' campaign in 2016 with the aim of improving the health, safety and wellbeing of our members in their workplaces across the UK. The ethos of our campaign was simple, healthy and well rested midwives and maternity support workers we know can and will provide safe high quality care for women and their families.

Since launching the campaign 134 NHS organisations have signed the campaign charter committing to work in partnership with the local RCM representatives to improve the health safety and wellbeing of midwives and maternity support workers.

Whilst there have been improvements since our 2016 survey, which showed that our Caring for You campaign is working and making a real difference to the working lives of midwives and maternity support workers. The situation for many of our members is still worrying and midwives and maternity support workers have never been so challenged in their ability to provide high quality and safe care. This is a real concern for the RCM and it should equally be a concern for employers and the Government.

The RCM will continue to campaign for better working conditions for midwives and maternity support workers so they in turn can give high quality safe care to women and their families. The business case for taking action on health, safety and wellbeing issues is clear. There are currently high levels of stress and burn out amongst midwives and maternity support workers caused in large part to staffing shortages and workload and this is causing midwives to leave midwifery. Therefore, maternity services are in a catch-22 situation with many midwives leaving midwifery because of understaffing which further exacerbates staffing levels. Understaffing has also resulted in low levels of staff engagement and there is well-known evidence that shows high levels of staff engagement improves patient outcomes.

Please make sure you and your RCM Branch are involved in Caring for You, organisations can still sign the charter and we expect those who have already done so to continue working on action plans in partnership with the Head of Midwifery. Together we can make a difference and ensure that we have healthy maternity workplaces that deliver high quality safe care.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G Walton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gill Walton
Chief Executive
The Royal College of Midwives

Introduction

In May 2016 the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) launched our Caring for You Campaign with the aim of improving RCM members' health, safety and wellbeing at work so they are able to provide high quality maternity care for women and their families.

We know that midwives and maternity support workers are experiencing higher levels of stress and burn out due to staff shortages and high workload and this has resulted in low levels of staff engagement. Midwives and maternity support workers report low levels of engagement with organisational initiatives to improve productivity. There is well-known evidence that shows high levels of staff engagement improve organisations' financial performance through savings on litigation costs and sickness absence costs and this improves patient outcomes. Midwives and maternity support workers have never been so challenged in their ability to provide high quality and safe care.

In November 2017 the RCM conducted a follow-up survey of members (including midwives, maternity support workers and students) to ask their views about the Caring for You Campaign and asked them about their health, safety and wellbeing. In total there were 673 responses. When comparing the findings of the 2017 survey to our 2016 Caring for You survey there are improvements in some areas but generally, despite the best efforts of the Caring for You Campaign, maternity units are still struggling with midwives, maternity support workers and student midwives feeling stress and burn out and in some cases health, safety and wellbeing has become worse over the last eighteen months.

This publication gives information about the findings of the survey and the next steps for the Caring for You Campaign. The publication is divided into the following sections:

- **About the Caring for You Campaign**
- **Evaluation of the Caring for You Campaign**
- **Findings of the RCM's Survey of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of Midwives and Maternity Support Workers**
- **Next Steps**

For more information please contact CaringforYou@rcm.org.uk

About the Caring for You Campaign

In May 2016 the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) launched our Caring for You Campaign with the aim of improving RCM members' health, safety and wellbeing at work so they are able to provide high quality maternity care for women and their families.

The objectives of the Caring for You Campaign were to:

- **Add to the evidence base that links good health, safety and wellbeing of staff to good outcomes for women and their families.**
- **Increase awareness of the RCM's health and safety work at both a national and local level.**
- **Champion and promote organisations that take action on health, safety and wellbeing as best practice.**
- **Improve RCM members' health, safety and wellbeing.**
- **Embed health, safety and wellbeing locally with an increased network of health and safety representatives.**

The Caring for You Campaign sought to do this by asking organisations to sign up to our Caring for You Charter. The purpose of the Caring for You Charter was for Heads of Midwifery to make a commitment to work in partnership with local RCM Health and Safety Representatives to improve RCM members' health, safety and wellbeing so they are able to provide high quality and safe maternity care to women and their families. Therefore, by signing up to the Caring for You Charter we would meet the objectives of the Campaign as detailed above. The Caring for You Charter asked organisations to work with the RCM to meet five commitments:

1. Work in partnership with the RCM Health and Safety Representative to develop and implement an action plan about health, safety and wellbeing issues that are important to the maternity workforce and maternity service users.
2. Ensure that midwives and maternity support workers have access to a variety of shift patterns and flexible working and promote a positive workplace culture around working time including taking breaks.
3. Foster a positive working environment for all by signing up to the RCM/RCOG statement of commitment calling for zero tolerance policy on undermining and bullying behaviours.
4. Enable midwives and maternity support workers to access occupational health and other organisational policies for both their mental and physical health, safety and wellbeing.
5. Nurture a compassionate and supportive workplace that cares for midwives and maternity support workers so that they can care for women and their families.

The RCM provided organisations with poster-sized copies of the Caring for You Charter so that they could be displayed in the workplace locally and contacted all the RCM members at that employer to let them know their organisation has signed.

Signing the Caring for You Charter is just the first step in the campaign. Organisations that sign up to the Charter were promising to work in partnership with their local RCM Health and Safety Representative on the five commitments in the Caring for You Charter, in particular developing and implementing a local action plan about health, safety and wellbeing issues that are important to the maternity workforce and maternity service users. This way organisations are working with the local RCM branch to address issues that are important to RCM members locally, every organisation is different and has different priorities so will have different action plans.

When action plans have been developed and implemented the RCM agreed to share them as good practice to help and inspire other organisations to make positive changes in their workplaces. To help us showcase these examples of good practice the RCM launched a Caring for You award as part of the 2017 RCM Annual Awards to recognise organisations that have put in place actions to address the health, safety and wellbeing of maternity staff to provide high quality and safe care to women.

You can find out more about the Caring for You Campaign www.rcm.org.uk/caringforyou

The next section details our evaluation of the Caring for You Campaign based on what members told us in the RCM's survey. The final section of this publication details next steps of the Caring for You Campaign.

Evaluation of the RCM's Caring for You Campaign

In total 134 organisations signed up to the RCM's Caring for You Charter which is 81% of the total number of NHS organisations in the UK.

When asked about the changes their organisation had made following signing up to the Caring for You Charter:

- **19.2% of respondents said they were more likely to take their break.**
- **16.7% of respondents said that their organisation has assessed their staffing and hired more midwives.**
- **13.6% of respondents said that they know about their organisation's occupational health policies and how to access them.**
- **12% of respondents said that bullying and undermining behaviours have been reduced.**

Following the Caring for You Campaign 31.6% of members feel the RCM has improved at raising health, safety and wellbeing concerns.

RCM members said:

"We've had chances to review our working patterns as part of service redesign and I think the Caring for You Campaign influenced that"

Midwife, England

"The Caring for You Campaign has made conversations around health and wellbeing at work more openly discussed and staff feel more confident to air their concerns"

Midwife, England

"There has been a big change around of managers. Shift leaders in post and more staff employed"

Midwife, England

"The RCM's Caring for You survey has been a useful tool to start to highlight and address health, safety and wellbeing issues within midwifery."

Midwife, England

"As a newly qualified midwife the lack of staff within the unit at present is often causing dangerous workloads of women per midwife on a shift. It's getting to the point that I go to work knowing I will not get a break because the complexities and time that women need. I love my job but feel like at the moment I am extremely stressed even when I'm not at work. The staff morale at the unit is extremely low at the moment. I am constantly feeling my self-esteem dropping as I'm feeling like I cannot give the care I would like to provide at the standard that I would like. It would have been nice for my employer to implement this campaign in order to try and improve the current situation."

Midwife, England

This is just the beginning for the Caring for You Campaign. As detailed in our Caring for You Survey Results publication in 2016 there are significant health, safety and wellbeing problems in maternity units and these can't be solved overnight.

There are a number of comments in the survey results from members who have said that there hasn't been a lot of change in their organisation as a result of signing the Caring for You Charter. Signing the Caring for You Charter is just the first step in the campaign and cannot be the only step.

We expect organisations that sign up to work in partnership with their local RCM Health and Safety Representative on the five commitments in the Caring for You Charter, in particular developing and implementing a local action plan about health, safety and wellbeing issues that are important to the maternity workforce and maternity service users. You can read more about the future of the Caring for You Campaign in the 'next steps' section of this publication.

Despite the best efforts of the Caring for You Campaign, maternity units are still struggling with midwives and maternity support workers feeling stress and burn out. You can read more about the current state of midwives' and maternity support workers' health, safety and wellbeing in the next section.



"Our senior team is very caring and compassionate. Always looks into our concerns for us and takes them seriously. We have a Caring for You clinic once a month to share any concerns we have."

Midwife, England

Findings of the RCM's Survey of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of Midwives and Maternity Support Workers

This section details the findings of our survey questions that asked about midwives', maternity support workers' and students' health, safety and wellbeing at work. It is clear that there has been improvement in members' health, safety and wellbeing at work but what is important to note is that midwives and maternity support workers are feeling stress and burn out and in some cases, health, safety and wellbeing is worse than eighteen months ago.

It is clear that because of staff shortages maternity units are struggling to meet the demands of the service and fundamentally, organisations are relying on the goodwill of midwives and maternity support workers. However, this is leading to high levels of stress and burn out and is causing midwives to leave midwifery.

Maternity services are in a catch-22 situation with many midwives leaving midwifery because of understaffing which further exacerbates staffing levels. RCM members continue to feel challenged in their ability to provide high quality care to women and their families.

The results are divided into the following sections:

- **Breaks and working time**
- **Sickness absence and stress**
- **Work intensification and service delivery**
- **Staff engagement**
- **Errors, near misses and incidents**
- **Bullying and undermining behaviours**

Breaks and working time

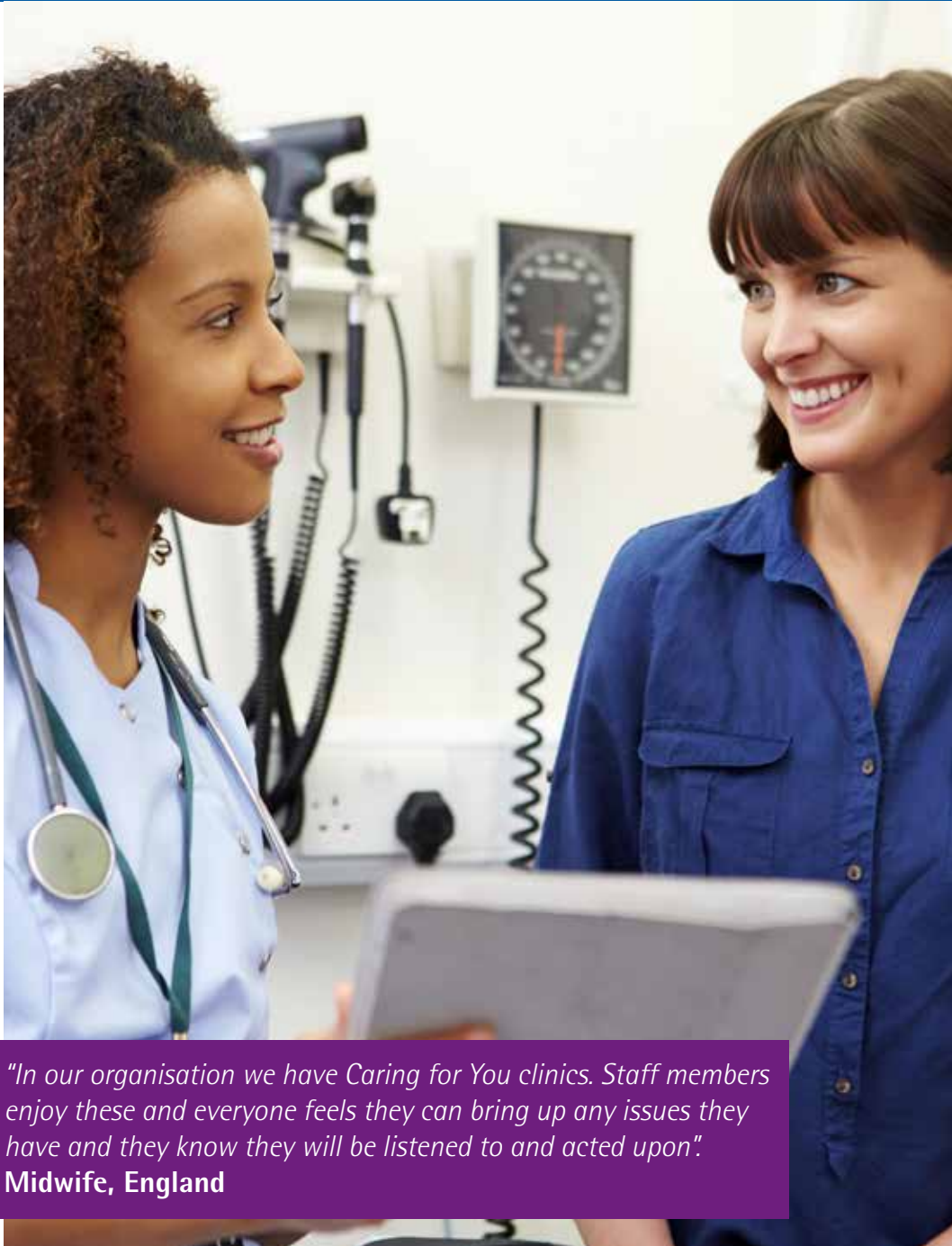
The 2017 survey of midwives' and maternity support workers' health, safety and wellbeing at work has found that:

- **Only 26.6% of respondents said they take their entitled breaks most or all of the time, this is an improvement from our 2016 Caring for You survey when only 21% of respondents said they take their entitled breaks most or all of the time.**
- **37.7% of respondents said they skip meals at work most or all of the time, this is an improvement from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 44% of respondents said they skip meals at work most or all of the time.**
- **58% of respondents said they eat meals while working most or all of the time, this is worse than our 2016 Caring for You survey when 54% of respondents said they eat meals while working most or all of the time.**
- **56.6% of respondents said they feel dehydrated at work most or all of the time because they don't have enough time to drink, this is an improvement from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 62% of respondents said they feel dehydrated at work most or all of the time because they don't have enough time to drink.**
- **54.2% of respondents said they delay using the toilet because they don't have enough time most or all of the time, this is an improvement from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 62% of respondents said they delay using the toilet because they don't have enough time most or all of the time.**
- **19.4% of respondents worked five or more hours extra every week unpaid, this has increased from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 17% of respondents said they worked five or more hours extra every week unpaid.**

RCM members said:

"They talk about family friendly environment but it is not. We can't change or swap our shift with colleagues, we have to meet with the manager face to face. We are not even allowed to send them email request, even when we have discussed it with the other midwife".

Midwife, England



"In our organisation we have Caring for You clinics. Staff members enjoy these and everyone feels they can bring up any issues they have and they know they will be listened to and acted upon."

Midwife, England

Sickness absence and stress

The 2017 survey of midwives' and maternity support workers' health, safety and wellbeing at work has found that:

- 55.7% of respondents said they had experienced musculoskeletal problems as a result of work activities in the last twelve months. This is slightly worse than our 2016 Caring for You survey when 54% of respondents said they had experienced musculoskeletal problems as a result of work activities.
- 65.9% of respondents said they had felt unwell as a result of work-related stress in the last twelve months, this is slightly worse than our 2016 Caring for You survey when 64% of respondents said they had felt unwell as a result of work-related stress.
- 38.5% of respondents said they felt stress every or most days, this is an improvement from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 48% of respondents said they felt stress every or most days.
- The three most common reasons for feeling stress are workload (78.7%); staff shortages (75.2%); and not enough time to do their job (70.0%). These are exactly the same reasons as our 2016 Caring for You survey.
- 63.6% of respondents said they had come to work in the last three months despite not feeling well enough to carry out their duties which is an improvement from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 71% of respondents said they had come to work in the last three months despite not feeling well enough to carry out their duties.

RCM members said:

"We have a bespoke, free staff wellbeing one to one service and study days available to all maternity staff on a weekly basis"

Midwife, England

"I worry about the amount of staff who are currently away from work suffering from stress. I feel it is not being addressed by senior management as an issue"

Midwife, England

"The understaffing and excessive workload makes my job stressful and is wearing me down slowly. I worry for my mental health as well as my physical health. We have multiple team members who have been midwives for over ten years but have left or are on sick because of mental health issues because of how bad things have been lately".

Midwife, England

"I feel a lot of the time that I cannot give the care I want to give as it is too busy and I am only giving basic care. This then causes me stress and anxiety because I trained to be a midwife to make a difference to women and I don't feel I can do that most of the time. This makes me feel very sad".

Midwife, Wales

"Within the NHS I don't feel people are well-supported if they have to be absent due to sickness. There is a pressure to return to work too soon and there is a fear of the penalties if you have too much time off sick. With regard to wellbeing, actually paying us better and getting more staff would be good! The retention of staff is an issue".

Midwife, England

"I fear that my organisation understands little to nothing about the symptoms of menopause and its effects on me and my inability to work night shifts which last for 12 hours and sometimes without a break. I tire easily because of my insomnia and at times my concentration levels are poor. I have discussed this with my managers who have stated that the organisation does not have to support my request not to do On-Calls despite my having a certificate from my doctor and have suggested that I go off sick if not fit for work, I feel I am fit for some aspects of my work but not all".

Midwife, England

Work intensification and service delivery

The 2017 survey of midwives' and maternity support workers' health, safety and wellbeing at work has found that:

- 83.2% strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'my workload has increased in the last twelve months'.
- 31.1% strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I have adequate materials, supplies and equipment to do my work'.
- 11.79% strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'there are enough staff at this organisation for me to do my job properly'.
- 24.3% strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I am satisfied with the recognition I get for good work'.
- 31.1% strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I am able to deliver the care I aspire to'.
- 70.5% strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I often feel that service users want to talk more but I have to move on to the next subject otherwise I will run out of time'.
- 47.3% strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I can only get my work done if I stay after my shift'.
- 31.1% strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'even when I stay after my shift I still don't complete my work'.
- 51.8% strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I feel overwhelmed with how much work I have to do'.
- 60.0% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I have to neglect some tasks because there is so much to do'.
- 18.2% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I often cry at work because of the pressure I am under'.
- 59.3% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I find it hard to stop thinking about work when I am at home'.
- 45.5% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I am worried about making a mistake work because I am exhausted'.
- 56.9% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'my personal life suffers because of my working life'.

RCM members said:

"We are working better as a team. We feel we have a voice. Working relationships between managers and staff are improved".

Midwife, England

"In my organisation health, safety and wellbeing is poorly prioritised. Staff do not feel valued. We are expected to work at a ridiculous pace with excessive workloads and poor staffing. All whilst dotting all the i's and crossing the t's. It is not possible or sustainable to continue working this way".

Midwife, England

"I love being a midwife but I'm exhausted and what we do is never good enough. Management support is non existing. We have employed so many junior midwives to replace those who have retired or left the profession burned out. So as an experienced midwife you are hammered with high risk patients; expected to support the junior midwives and mentor students and then our organisation wonders why we are exhausted".

Midwife, Scotland

"I am seriously considering leaving the profession due to the shift patterns and length of shifts and the demands are too excessive. Midwifery has become to physically and emotionally draining. I am currently pursuing different ways to get out especially because our current pay does not reflect the responsibility placed on midwives".

Midwife, England

"There are ever increasing pressures to do more and more. It is quite stressful and there is a constant feeling of not completing a woman's care".

Midwife, England



"Staff shortages and recruitment issues make the job impossible. The standard of care given to families has reached an all-time low. Staff are receiving a constant barrage of texts and phone calls on their days off to come into work. Staff are working days and nights in same week with little rest days in between. On-call staff are expected to work a full day, go home to rest for few hours and then come in to work the night which is clearly unsafe. Managers are not managing as they are just working clinically to bring the numbers up. There is no work-life balance anymore".

Midwife, England

Staff engagement

The 2017 survey of midwives' and maternity support workers' health, safety and wellbeing at work has found that:

- 27.4% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I want to leave my organisation as soon as possible'.
- 42.5% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I want to leave my organisation in the next two years'.
- 33.7% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I want to leave midwifery/maternity'.
- 28.4% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I would recommend midwifery/maternity as a career'.
- 26.8% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work'.
- 38.6% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed with the statement 'I am proud to work for my organisation'.

RCM members said:

"As a community midwife it is very clear that there is a total lack of support for our health, safety and wellbeing. Only yesterday another of my colleagues, who qualified five years ago and who is an amazing midwife resigned because of the constant stress that she feels from above. It was a very sad day for the rest of the team, and we will not be able to function much longer as we are."

Midwife, England

"We are constantly short staffed with an absent managerial team and no beds or time for the women we are trying to care for. Sadly although I have loved being a midwife I am looking to leave the profession."

Midwife, England

Errors, near misses and incidents

The 2017 survey of midwives' and maternity support workers' health, safety and wellbeing at work has found that:

- 54.3% of respondents said in the last month they saw errors, near misses, or incidents that could have hurt service users, this is a slight increase from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 52% of respondents said in the last month they saw errors, near misses, or incidents that could have hurt service users.
- 38.3% of respondents said in the last month they saw errors, near misses, or incidents that could have hurt staff, this is a slight increase from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 37% of respondents said in the last month they saw errors, near misses, or incidents that could have hurt staff.

RCM members said:

"I am very close to burn out. I am seriously considering that I want to leave so I don't end up leaving as a result of a mistake. I have been a midwife since 1995 and have always felt proud to say I am a midwife... now I just say I work in the NHS!"

Midwife, England

"Despite constantly reporting to management that our staffing levels are so poor it is making it an unsafe environment for staff and service users, nothing is done to help. They will never close the unit despite the safety issues. When something does happen it is the midwives who end up being investigated despite our continual concerns being voiced"

Midwife, England

"Completely unsafe working environments. I am worried that a large error is going to occur at the trust soon because the workload and staff shortages are unsafe. Yet the managers remain sat in offices when ward staff are struggling with workload"

Midwife, England



"The Caring for You Campaign has made conversations around health and wellbeing at work more openly discussed and staff feel more confident to air their concerns".

Midwife, England

Bullying and undermining behaviours

The 2017 survey of midwives' and maternity support workers' health, safety and wellbeing at work has found that:

- 50.4% of respondents said that they had experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from service users or their families, this is a slight decrease from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 51% of respondents said they had experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from service users or their families.
- 36.3% of respondents said that they had experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from managers, this is an increase from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 31% of respondents said they had experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from their managers.
- 35.7% of respondents said that they had experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from their colleagues, this is an increase from our 2016 Caring for You survey when 33% of respondents said they had experienced harassment, bullying or abuse from other colleagues.
- 32% of respondents who had experienced harassment, bullying or abuse said they did not report it; this is a decrease from our 2016 Caring for You survey in which 37% of respondents said they did not report it.

RCM members said:

"Poor management has led to a workplace where we feel unsupported and misunderstood. We are treated like children and not included in any decisions"

Midwife, Scotland

"The CQC criticised our trust for a culture of bullying and lack of leadership. That was a year ago. The leadership hasn't changed. There is no hope for change at our trust whilst the current regime remains"

Midwife, England

"The Caring for You Campaign has definitely improved staff breaks and matrons are more likely to ensure breaks are taken"

Midwife, England

"There is a terrible, deeply ingrained, long-standing culture of bullying based on outdated ideas about hierarchy and bad managers who have had no real management training. Women and their families experience bad care from small minded individuals who bully and are bullied. It's awful"

Midwife, England

"Starting a wellbeing service with massage and counselling service. Food trolley to each area to ensure staff taking a break. Improved access to management. Collaboration with local RCM branch and Management, holding joint study days"

Midwife, England

Next Steps

This is just the beginning for Caring for You, there is significant health, safety and wellbeing problems in maternity units and these cannot be solved overnight. When comparing the findings of the 2017 survey to our 2016 Caring for You survey there does appear to be improvements in some areas. When comparing the results of the 2017 survey we need to consider staffing in maternity services has not improved significantly, maternity cases are becoming more complex and the birth rate is increasing. These increased pressures on demands have a significant impact on health, safety and wellbeing of midwives, maternity support workers and student midwives.

The business case for taking action on health, safety and wellbeing issues is clear. There are currently high levels of stress and burn out amongst midwives and maternity support workers caused in large part to staffing shortages and workload and this is causing midwives to leave midwifery.

We want every organisation that has signed up to the Caring for You Charter to work in partnership with their local RCM Health and Safety Representative on the five commitments in the Caring for You Charter, in particular developing and implementing a local action plan about health, safety and wellbeing issues that are important to the maternity workforce and maternity service users. Signing the Caring for You Charter is just the first step in committing to the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and cannot be the only step.

We want to continue to showcase good practice and will continue to publish case studies to help and inspire other organisations. RCM Health and Safety Representatives and Heads of Midwifery can still submit their developed action plans to their RCM Regional and National Officers to be published.

It is clear that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done and a lot of the problems cannot be fixed overnight. However, it is also clear that by working together we can make a difference and improve midwives and maternity support workers health, safety and wellbeing so that they can give high quality and safe care to women and their families.



"The RCM's Caring for You survey has been a useful tool to start to highlight and address health, safety and wellbeing issues within midwifery."

Midwife, England

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