James Lind Alliance
Priority Setting Partnerships



top 10 research priorities for midwifery practice and maternity care

Royal College of Midwives

top 10 research priorities for midwifery practice and maternity care



Use these priorities to underpin your service evaluations, QI projects and research studies. Tell us your plans at researchpriorities@rcm.org.uk. Let's work together to action these priorities.

1. **Culturally-safe maternity care**
   What is required to create and implement culturally-safe maternity care in the UK for women and birthing parents, and their babies, and staff from the global ethnic majority? What role does decolonisation of the midwifery curriculum and ongoing learning in clinical settings play in improving cultural competence and safety?

2. **Induction of labour**
   What are the appropriate reasons for induction of labour? What are the short- and long-term maternal and baby outcomes associated with it? How should this be communicated to women and birthing parents and their informed consent gained?

3. **Personalised maternity care**
   What are the important components of personalised maternity care to ensure informed choice and decision making and how should this care be provided?

4. **Culture within maternity services**
   How does the culture within maternity services, including racism, incivility and other negative behaviours among staff impact on midwives, maternity support workers and maternity care assistants and what can be done to address this?

5. **The impact of medicalisation of birth**
   What factors mean that birth is becoming increasingly medicalised, and what are the long- and short-term outcomes resulting from interventions? How does medicalisation impact on the choices that women and birthing parents can make and the clinical care that they receive?

6. **Pre-existing psychological trauma**
   How can the causes and consequences of pre-existing psychological trauma during the perinatal period be better understood and prevented or the impact reduced? What role does trauma-informed care play in addressing it?

7. **Postnatal care**
   How can postnatal care be prioritised and improved so that mothers and birthing parents and their babies receive high-quality care that meets their individual needs?

8. **Bereavement care**
   How can the maternity services improve bereavement care? How should the best available information be used by maternity services to improve the bereavement care experience for parents who suffer a loss in their current or previous pregnancies? What support and care provision should be available for families following a maternal death?

9. **Recruitment and retention of midwives**
   How can midwifery continue to be an attractive career for potential applicants? How can midwifery students and qualified midwives be helped to stay in the profession in a way that provides a positive work environment and supports the provision of safe and compassionate care?

10. **Pregnancy and neurodiversity**
    What are the specific needs of neurodivergent individuals (including those undiagnosed) throughout their maternity care, and what knowledge, understanding and communication skills should maternity care professionals possess to provide safe and compassionate care?

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Find out more

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The RCM Research Prioritisation Project summary

Background

Research in maternity care is fundamental to improving experiences and outcomes for women, birthing parents and their families. Led by the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), this is the first ever UK-wide top 10 list of research priorities for UK midwifery practice and maternity care.

Project methods

The project used the James Lind Alliance approach of surveys and a workshop to seek a UK-wide consensus, using an equality, diversity and inclusion lens throughout. The project invited woman and birthing parents, their families and supporters, midwives, midwifery support workers, maternity care assistants and midwifery students from across the UK to say what research gaps mattered most to them. Over 80 Project Partner organisations, including service user-led organisations, NHS Trusts and Boards, universities and other midwifery professional organisations helped to raise awareness of their project among their networks.

Next steps

This project provides a robust set of priority areas for future research into midwifery practice and maternity care. The RCM is championing the Top 10 research priorities to:

- improve funding for midwifery and maternity care research
- ensure funding is focused on these priorities
- encourage midwives to lead research based on these priorities

Contact

researchpriorities@rcm.org.uk

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@MidwivesRCM
@midwives_rcm
@the-royal-college-of-midwives
@rcm.org.uk
@MidwivesRCM

The Royal College of Midwives
10-18 Union Street,
London SE1 1SZ

0300 303 0444
enquires@rcm.org.uk

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