

Maternity and Neonatal National Assurance Assessment

NHSPI.NMNAA@wales.nhs.uk

PGGIG.ASMNC@wales.nhs.uk



Terms of reference Wales maternity and neonatal assurance assessment panel

Background

In May 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care commissioned an assurance assessment of the maternity and neonatal services in Wales.

The assurance assessment will be led by an independent Chair, with the final report being presented to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care by the end of the calendar year.

This nationally commissioned assurance assessment is part of a suite of interventions which the Welsh Government is committed to ensure that the maternity and neonatal safety support programme remains contemporary and responsive to changing evidence for improved outcomes. It will focus on assessing maternity and neonatal services across Wales against the criteria within the National Quality Statement and Quality Standards. It will identify areas of good practice and those where there may be residual risk or concern within maternity and neonatal care. It will gather intelligence using a multi-method approach, providing insights and findings for the Independent Chair and Oversight Panel.

The assurance assessment will:

- Strengthen national oversight of perinatal (maternity and neonatal) quality and safety through a unified, experience-led and evidence-based rapid assessment, undertaken in partnership with women and families, providers, and system leaders.
- Promote equity and consistency by identifying and addressing any unwarranted variation in care quality, outcomes, and the lived experiences of women and families.
- Accelerate improvement by capturing, celebrating, and spreading learning from exemplary practice across all services.
- Safeguard women and families by ensuring that any quality or safety concerns are rapidly identified, escalated, and resolved, with measurable and sustained impact.

Purpose

The purpose of the Assurance Assessment Panel is to undertake an assessment of data and information to determine quality and safety of maternity and neonatal services within each health board and provide report to the Cabinet Secretary for health on current state of maternity and neonatal services in Wales and make recommendations for the future development or improvement of services.

The Assurance Assessment Panel will consider and form:

- A reflection of the current quality and safety of maternity and neonatal services within each health board and at a national level

- An assessment of the processes in place at an organisational level to drive improvements in quality and safety in maternity and neonatal services.
- An independent view on priorities for improving quality and safety.

The Panel will be expected to draw on their knowledge and experience of approaches they have delivered elsewhere, and appropriate comparative evidence bases of other systems in order to provide views on how maternity and neonatal services in Wales should be improved.

The Panel will work with NHS Performance and Improvement and Welsh Government officials who will provide the necessary information to inform the Panel's assessment.

Methodology and Expectations

The methodology and expectations for the assurance assessment are set out in the Wales Maternity and Neonatal Assurance Assessment Terms of Reference.

Learning should be shared with health boards and stakeholders as it becomes apparent to allow rapid action to improve the safety of maternity and neonatal care.

Each panel member will be asked to provide oversight and guidance to one of the identified workstreams.

Role of the Panel

The Assurance Assessment Panel will need to:

- Agree robust communications plan for stakeholders about assessment outcomes and any resulting recommendations
- Agree a methodology to undertake desktop analysis of health board data reviewing the quality, performance and outcomes of the current services, benchmarked against national standards and the all Wales position
- Agree process for peer review if felt appropriate.
- Agree a self-assessment methodology to assess whether the service is safe, effective, equitable, caring, responsive to people's needs and well-led.
- Agree criteria to undertake series of visits to each site.
- Agree a process to undertake listening events and focus groups to gather patient and staff experience.
- Agree a process to gather staff feedback and experience.
- Escalate any wider governance-related issues or concerns which emerge to the health board and Welsh Government as appropriate
- Undertake an assessment of all data and information provided by NHS P&I to determine if individual health board maternity and neonatal services are safe, effective, equitable, caring, responsive to people's needs and well-led.
- Identify any practical or cultural barriers within services that might inhibit progress and make recommendations for mitigating actions and improvements.
- Identify action necessary to ensure the provision of safe, sustainable, high quality, patient centred maternity and neonatal services. This should include advice about the need for, and timing of, any follow-up reviews and the identification of any wider lessons for the NHS in Wales.

- Advise the Cabinet Secretary on any further action which the panel considers necessary to ensure the provision of safe, sustainable, high quality, patient centred maternity and neonatal services.
- Identify any future improvements and maintenance of quality, patient safety and assurance mechanisms for maternity and neonatal services including any wider lessons for the NHS in Wales.

Membership

The assurance assessment panel will be chaired by an independent chair. The membership of the Panel will consist of a small number of members with a range of skills and experience covering family engagement, obstetrics, midwifery and neonatology with a broad range of experience and backgrounds and an interest in improving the quality of maternity and neonatal services.

Project leads for each workstream from NHS Performance and Improvement may be in attendance to provide the panel with progress reports.

Engagement with the media

Panel members should not engage with any parts of the media through the assessment process and all queries to be directed to the assessment mailbox

Secretariat

Meetings of the assurance panel will be virtual via MS Teams, where possible, and held on a regular basis, as agreed with the Chair.

Secretariat for the meetings will be provided by NHS Performance and Improvement.

Version Control

Version 1	Draft for first meeting of the independent panel	September 2025
Version 2	Amendments following the first meeting of the independent panel	Agreed 26 September 2025