

Maternity and Neonatal Assurance Assessment

Women, Parent and Family Experience and Engagement Workstream

Terms of Reference

Oversight Panel Lead: Ken Sutton

Maternity and Neonatal National Assurance Assessment

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1. Background

This workstream forms part of a national programme to assess perinatal (maternity and neonatal) services across Wales for assurance purposes. Commissioned by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, the assessment seeks to understand and evidence quality, safety, and the lived experiences of those people accessing perinatal services.

The overall programme covers all elements of the National Quality Statement for Maternity and Neonatal Services, ensuring the breadth of perinatal care is included within this assessment. While not every standard is reflected within every workstream, there is effective coverage of all standards across the whole programme.

2. Aim

The aim of this workstream is to:

- Capture the experiences, insights, and priorities of women, parents and families who have accessed perinatal services across Wales through a national survey and targeted listening sessions.
- Focus on the relational, emotional, cultural, psychological, and practical dimensions of care.
- Actively seek to amplify the voices of service users, representing a broad range of demographics across Wales, to inform the assurance assessment process, its findings, and subsequent recommendations.
- Analyse the outputs from experience surveys and listening sessions, producing a report for the Independent Chair and Oversight Panel, delivering a completed product for December 2025.
- Alongside the two core strands: a national survey and listening sessions, it is recognised that some individuals may wish to share experiences linked to trauma or distress. To support this, an additional support element is being explored, which may include a dedicated email contact and/or a self-help directory. Where specific concerns are raised, individuals will be guided to their respective Health Board to respond in line with established processes such as 'Putting Things Right', ensuring that issues are addressed appropriately and within the right governance framework.

This workstream reflects the requirements of the Safe, Effective, Equitable, Person centered, and Learning, Improvement and Research Quality Standards (*Health and Care Quality Standards 2023 (WHC/2023/013)*).

3. Scope and methodology

The workstream will capture the lived experiences of women, parents, and families across Wales to directly inform the perinatal assurance assessment, striving to gather insights that are inclusive, ethically collected, and capable of driving meaningful improvement.

- **National perinatal survey:** A Wales-wide survey will be conducted during October and November 2025, providing a broad evidence base and enabling the voices of all women who birth during this period, together with parents and families, to contribute to the assessment.
- **Listening Sessions:** In-person and/or virtual sessions will be held across Wales, with particular focus on reaching under-represented women, parents and families in each Health Board region.
- **Methodology and facilitation:** A clear approach and model of facilitation will be embraced, shaped by the Workstream Planning Group, with consistency in core principles while allowing for local flexibility, to include:
 - A listening session/s in each Health Board region;
 - Creating opportunities for those people who wish to participate but do not want to attend a listening session;
 - Engaging with local community groups.
- **Safe delivery:** Listening sessions will have careful attention to:
 - Trauma-informed and culturally competent approaches
 - Sensitive group facilitation (including experiences of perinatal trauma, loss, or mental health challenges)
 - Ethical and anonymised outputs, themed and structured to feed directly into the assurance assessment
- **Supportive element:** An additional support pathway for those who wish to share experiences arising from trauma or distress will be explored. This may include a dedicated email contact and/or access to a self-help directory. Where individual concerns are raised, women, parents or families will be guided to their local Health Board for appropriate response through existing processes such as *Putting Things Right*.
- **Analysis and reporting:** The Workstream Planning Group will analyse all outputs and produce a summary report for the Independent Chair and Oversight Panel, with a completed product during December 2025. To note: It is anticipated the Panel will wish to receive iterative insights at the half-way juncture.

Key Objectives

The objectives of this workstream are to:

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- **Capture insights into experiences** across perinatal care, from antenatal to postnatal and neonatal services, reflecting a broad spectrum of perspectives.
- **Seek to engage under-represented groups**, including those with protected characteristics and others who may face barriers to participation.
- **Create psychologically safe, accessible, and culturally competent spaces** that enable women, parents, and families to share their experiences openly and with dignity.
- **Undertake a national perinatal survey** during October–November 2025, gathering the views, experiences, and priorities of women, parents, and families who have accessed maternity and neonatal services across Wales. The survey will explore the relational, emotional, cultural, psychological, and practical dimensions of perinatal care, highlighting what matters most to service users.
- **Enable a support element pathway** for those wishing to share experiences of trauma or distress, including a dedicated email contact and/or self-help directory, with onward signposting to local Health Boards for appropriate response through established processes such as *Putting Things Right*.
- **Generate outputs and findings that directly inform** the national perinatal assurance assessment, so that lived experience makes a meaningful contribution to understanding the quality, equity, and safety of care across the system.

Equality impact and safeguarding considerations

This workstream will operate in alignment with NHS Wales values and legal duties under the Equality Act (2010), Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015), Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) and the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (2022), Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010, Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020 and other key documents.

Key commitments:

- A proportionate equality impact assessment (EqIA) will be undertaken to inform the design and delivery of the listening sessions for under-represented groups.
- Sessions will be actively inclusive, with tailored strategies for mitigating participation barriers (e.g., language, travel, access, trust, childcare).

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- Sessions will incorporate intersectionality considerations to recognise overlapping forms of disadvantage or discrimination.
- Sessions will be conducted in a way that is culturally competent, anti-racist, and sensitive to individual identity, beliefs, and family context.
- The survey will be available in accessible formats for people who have accessed maternity or neonatal care within the defined period, across all Health Boards in Wales.
- The survey will aim to capture experience across the full pathway, from antenatal through postnatal and neonatal care, and reflects intersectional experiences.
- All responses, through the survey and listening sessions, will be anonymised and treated confidentially, with clear information provided about data use, consent, and how the information will be used to inform improvement.
- Communicate and promote the women, parent and family experience and engagement workstream to encourage high participation across all communities.
- A safeguarding protocol will be developed for the listening sessions (& signed off by the Director of the National Safeguarding Service) and include:
 - Pre-briefing and training for facilitators
 - Safe signposting to support services
 - Confidentiality boundaries and data handling
 - Clear escalation routes for disclosures of harm or risk

NB: Facilitators and stakeholders will be expected to uphold these principles and report concerns appropriately.

5. Workstream governance

The workstream will report progress to the Assurance Assessment Programme Group via the Operational Workstream Lead, providing regular updates on progress, risks and any issues that require escalation. A RAID (Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Dependencies) approach will be established for the workstream.

The Operational Workstream Lead will also report progress to the Independent Chair and Oversight Panel, with the Panel Lead, as agreed by the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).

The Terms of Reference will be approved by the Independent Chair and Oversight Panel.

Any changes to the terms of reference or delivery timeframe will need

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approval from the Senior Responsible Owner, Oversight Panel Lead and the Independent Chair.

The workstream will be administratively supported by the PMO team, to include:

- ✓ Arranging meetings
- ✓ Compiling agendas for the meetings in consultation with the Chair
- ✓ Collecting and preparing documents for the meetings, as required
- ✓ Producing notes, including maintaining an action log
- ✓ Maintaining a Risk & Issues Log
- ✓ Maintaining the Workstream Project Plan

A dedicated Workstream Planning Group will be established to guide, oversee, and actively support delivery of the workstream plan in a timely and comprehensive manner. The group will meet fortnightly via MS Teams, with additional meetings convened as required to respond flexibly to emerging needs.

The Planning Group will have a multidisciplinary composition and will provide robust oversight of the workstream, ensuring that activity is inclusive, credible, and sensitive to the needs of participants.

Facilitation and management of the listening sessions will be coordinated through the Planning Group, with a focus on upholding the quality, safety, and cultural competence of all interactions.

Workstream outputs and progress updates will be reported to the Assurance Assessment Programme Group, prior to consideration by the Panel Lead, and submission to the Independent Chair and Oversight Panel.

6. Budget

Direct costs will be incurred through staff and panel member time to fulfil the following high-level activities:

- Listening Session fees (venue booking)
 - Third Sector and/or Independent Facilitator utilisation.
 - Thematic review of findings.
 - Reasonable travel, subsistence, childcare and interpreter costs.
7. Key Stakeholders

Mapped stakeholders and engagement is part of the wider communication plan.
8. Alignment to existing work

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This work will build on and complement existing national and local initiatives to ensure a coordinated approach. It aligns with the National People's Experience Framework and the newly published Perinatal Engagement Framework, supporting a consistent focus on service user and family experience. Alignment will be maintained through the NHSPI Performance & Assurance Directorate and the Welsh Risk Pool in terms of Civica (the survey platform), ensuring synergy and integration with existing processes.

At the local level, the programme will connect with ongoing work in Health Boards, where perinatal services actively engage with women, parents and families through Maternity Voices Partnerships (MVPs) and third-sector organisations. Insights from these established engagement activities could inform the programme, avoid duplication and reinforce existing good practice.

7. High-level timeline

Refer to overall critical path and detailed Gantt chart, that covers workstream delivery timelines.