

Official

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To:

- NHS Trust and Foundation Trust:
  - Chief Executives
  - Chairs
  - Chief Nurses
  - Chief Midwives
  - Medical Directors
- ICS leads and Chairs
- LMNS/LMS leads
- CCG Accountable Officers

Skipton House  
80 London Road  
London  
SE1 6LH

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CC:

- Regional chief nurses
- Regional chief midwives
- Regional medical directors
- Regional obstetricians

Dear colleagues

### **Ockenden – Final report**

The [Ockenden – Final report](#) from the independent review of maternity services at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust was published on 30 March.

Donna Ockenden and her team have set out the terrible failings suffered by families at what should have been the most special time of their lives. We are deeply sorry for the loss and the heartbreak they have had to endure.

This report must act as an immediate call to action for all commissioners and providers of maternity and neonatal services who need to ensure lessons are rapidly learned and service improvements for women, babies, and their families are driven forward as quickly as possible.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with the Department of Health and Social Care to implement the 15 Immediate & Essential Actions (IEAs) and every trust, ICS and LMS/LMNS Board must consider and then act on the report's findings.

We have announced significant investment to kick-start transformation of maternity services with [investment of £127 million](#) over the next two years, on top of the £95 million annual increase that was started last year. This will fund further workforce expansion, leadership development, capital to increase neonatal cot capacity, additional support to LMS/LMNS and retention support. We will set out further information in the coming weeks.

Your Board has a duty to prevent the failings found at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust happening at your organisation / within your local system. The Ockenden report should be taken to your next public Board meeting and be shared

with all relevant staff – we strongly recommend everyone reads it, regardless of their role. After reviewing the report, you should take action to mitigate any risks identified and develop robust plans against areas where your services need to make changes, paying particular attention to the report's four key pillars:

1. Safe staffing levels
2. A well-trained workforce
3. Learning from incidents
4. Listening to families

The report illustrates the importance of creating a culture where all staff feel safe and supported to speak up. We expect every trust board to have robust Freedom to Speak Up training for all managers and leaders and a regular series of listening events. A dedicated maternity listening event should take place in the coming months. We will soon publish a revised national policy and guidance on speaking up.

Staff in maternity services may need additional health and wellbeing support. Please signpost colleagues to local support services or [national support for our people](#).

The report highlights the importance of listening to women and their families. Action needs to be taken locally to ensure women have the necessary information and support to make informed, personalised and safe decisions about their care.

It includes a specific action on continuity of carer: *'All trusts must review and suspend if necessary, the existing provision and further roll out of Midwifery Continuity of Carer (MCoC) unless they can demonstrate staffing meets safe minimum requirements on all shifts.'* (IEA 2, Safe Staffing page 164)

In line with the maternity transformation programme, trusts have already been asked to submit their MCoC plans by 15 June 2022. In doing so, they must take into account this IEA in ensuring that safe midwifery staffing plans are in place. Trusts should therefore immediately assess their staffing position and make one of the following decisions for their maternity service:

1. Trusts that can demonstrate staffing meets safe minimum requirements can continue existing MCoC provision and continue to roll out, subject to ongoing minimum staffing requirements being met for any expansion of MCoC provision.
2. Trusts that cannot meet safe minimum staffing requirements for further roll out of MCoC, but can meet the safe minimum staffing requirements for existing MCoC provision, should cease further roll out and continue to support at the current level of provision or only provide services to existing women on MCoC pathways and suspend new women being booked into MCoC provision.
3. Trusts that cannot meet safe minimum staffing requirements for further roll out of MCoC and for existing MCoC provision, should immediately suspend existing MCoC provision and ensure women are safely transferred to alternative maternity pathways of care, taking into consideration their individual needs; and any midwives in MCoC teams should be safely supported into other areas of maternity provision.

Boards must also assure themselves that any recent reviews of maternity and neonatal services have been fully considered, actions taken, and necessary assurance of implementation is in place.

We expect there will be further recommendations for maternity and neonatal services to consider later this year given other reviews underway. We are committed to consolidating actions to ensure a coherent national delivery plan.

However, there can be no delay in implementing local action that can save lives and improve the care women and their families are receiving now.

In the 25 January 2022 [letter](#) we asked you to set out at a Public Board your organisation's progress against the seven IEAs in the interim Ockenden report before the end of March 2022. Your position should be discussed with your LMS and ICS and reported to regional teams by 15 April 2022. We will be publishing a detailed breakdown of these returns and compliance by Trust with the first Ockenden IEAs at NHSE/I public Board in May. Your trust also needs to provide reliable data to the regular provider workforce return, with executive level oversight.

For organisations without maternity and neonatal services, this report must still be considered, and the valuable lessons digested.

We know you will be as determined as we are to ensure the NHS now makes the changes that will prevent other families suffering such devastating pain and loss.

Yours sincerely



**Amanda Pritchard**

NHS Chief Executive



**Ruth May**

Chief Nursing Officer



**Professor Stephen Powis**

National Medical Director