

Starting well and the NHS Long Term Plan

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Health and care leaders have come together to develop a Long Term Plan to make the NHS fit for the future, and to get the most value for patients out of every pound of taxpayers' investment. Our plan has been drawn up by those who know the NHS best, including frontline health and care staff, patient groups and other experts.

To give everyone a strong start in life, the NHS Long Term Plan will:

- Deliver 50% reductions in stillbirth, mother and child deaths and serious brain injury.
- Provide specialist care for women at high risk of giving birth prematurely.
- Ensure most women receive continuity of carer throughout their pregnancy and beyond by 2021, with a focus on those groups who will benefit most.
- Expand support for perinatal mental health conditions, with 24,000 more women accessing specialist services by 2023/24.
- Reduce A&E attendances by children by improving services elsewhere, and improve the quality of care for children with long term conditions such as asthma, epilepsy and diabetes.
- Treat a further 1,000 children a year for severe complications related to their obesity, such as diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, sleep apnoea and poor mental health, by 2022/23.

Over the last decade the NHS has contributed to significant reductions in stillbirths and neonatal deaths, coupled with improvements in women's experience of care in childbirth. The NHS Long Term Plan sets out how we will continue to build on that progress over the next decade, but also broaden our focus to improve services for children with common long-term conditions.

A range of actions will be taken to ensure that the quality and safety of maternity services continues to improve, more women are able to exercise choice about the kind of services they receive, and that tailored support is given to those mothers who are at risk of premature birth, including support for mothers to quit smoking.

Hundreds of thousands more women will benefit from continuity of carer during pregnancy, and all women will be able to access their maternity notes and information online and on their smartphones.

Neonatal critical care services will also be expanded, as well as mental health services for new parents, including partners of women experiencing perinatal mental health problems.

Clinical networks will be established to improve services for children with long-term conditions, including asthma, diabetes and epilepsy, with paediatric surgical and critical care networks seeking to achieve similar improvements for those needing urgent care. Up to 1,000 more children a year will also receive treatment for severe complications related to obesity, reducing the need for more-invasive treatment later.

And where beneficial, we will move to a 0-25 model for certain services, delivering care which is based on need rather than age.

Case study

A team of 'Neighbourhood Midwives' in London is offering expectant mums greater continuity of care throughout their pregnancy, labour and postnatal support.

The trailblazing approach sees 80 per cent of women give birth with a midwife they know and who knows about their individual care needs and wishes, compared to 12 per cent nationally.

One year on the pilot is already showing positive benefits; women having their first or second baby have experienced the need for fewer medical treatments during birth, with all new mums taking up breastfeeding and two-thirds were still breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks.

The findings from this project is now helping to inform national work to provide continuity of care to more mothers.