



We support all maternity service users to navigate the system as it exists, and campaign for a system which truly meets the needs of all

Kate Brintworth
Chief Midwifery Officer
NHS England

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AN OPEN LETTER FROM AIMS TO ENGLAND'S SECOND NATIONAL CHIEF MIDWIFERY OFFICER

Dear Kate

On behalf of AIMS I'd like to welcome you to your new role as England's second Chief Midwifery Officer.

AIMS (www.aims.org.uk) has been campaigning for improvements to the maternity services in the UK since 1960. AIMS works towards better births for all by campaigning and information sharing, protecting human rights in childbirth and helping everyone to know their rights, whatever birth they want, and wherever they want it.

As part of our work, AIMS regularly contributes as a stakeholder to consultations on NICE guidelines and has successfully influenced the recommendations and language of many of these to better support women and babies through their maternity journey. We are also a member of England's Maternity Transformation Programme Stakeholder Council, and network with other influential organisations in the birthing world, such as the Royal College of Midwives, Royal College of Gynaecologists & Obstetricians, NHS-England, NMPA and MBRRACE.

AIMS had long campaigned for midwifery to be recognised as a separate profession which needs a specific national clinical leader to work equally alongside the role of Chief Nursing Officer. We see this role as crucial to leading maternity transformation, strengthening and sustaining midwifery as a distinct and unique profession in healthcare, one whose place and value in a well-functioning maternity system - and indeed public health more generally - is not only well evidenced but undisputed.

You come to this role at a time of great public awareness of how dysfunctional the maternity services have become. As well as the negative impact of this on service users, the impact this has on staff morale, retention and recruitment is real. We appreciate that this means that your efforts to support the system, to increase and maintain adequate staffing levels and staff deployed for maximum effectiveness, will be paramount.

Some of this work will inevitably feel like, and indeed be, quick fixes. But we urge you to position your stewardship of the profession within an unrelenting focus on sustainable service reconfiguration, as set out in Better Births. We need a service in which many of our midwives' roles are to provide full pathway relational care, embedded in wider community-based services. Without such a reconfiguration, we cannot see how maternity services can be made safe for all. We look forward to seeing how ICSs can best support this vision.

For our part, AIMS looks forward to a time when we no longer talk much about this continuity of carer model of care, because it will be the standard model of care offered to all, to support the achievement of safe personalised equitable care. We appreciate that progress within the context of the current NHS-E Three Year Delivery Plan might look slow, but there is much we need to do now. We ask you to include us, as part of the wider maternity services improvement community, in strategic conversations about the delivery strategy for this policy objective, and look forward to hearing your proposals in this regard.

Beyond this, the second post-holder in the role of Chief Midwifery Officer for England comes with certain expectations. For example, we look forward to seeing evaluations of the workstreams that your predecessor put in place. Taking the wider midwifery leadership team development work, at national and regional levels, as an example: have these roles delivered against expectations, and what have been the barriers if not?

There is much else to talk about, of course, but for now we congratulate you on your appointment, and we very much look forward to seeing you introduce yourself, and your workplan.

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Volunteer, AIMS
On behalf of the AIMS Campaigns Team

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