



ASSOCIATION FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN THE MATERNITY SERVICES

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**PRESS RELEASE: immediate**

**SCATHING PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE REPORT ON  
MATERNITY CARE**

The Public Accounts Committee found there was a national shortage of 2,300 midwives and said many maternity units were "running at a loss".

In a scathing report about maternity care the committee reported rates of infection among new mothers and the baby as well as injury to the newborn "*are all higher at the weekend*".

It added: "*Although there have been substantial improvements in levels of consultant presence on labour wards in recent years, over half of obstetric units were still not meeting the levels recommended by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists at September 2012.*"

Consultant presence in the labour wards is not the primary problem in maternity care. It is the failure to make available community based midwifery, so that fit and healthy women and babies are supported to give birth in free-standing midwifery units or at home; and midwives are enabled to practice midwifery, as opposed to medicalised obstetric care.

To give birth successfully women need, peace, quiet, confidence and a skilled supportive midwife, something that is in very short supply in an overcrowded obstetric unit. The research is clear, the most dangerous place for fit and healthy women to give birth is an obstetric unit.

If the majority of women were cared for in the community those with problems can then be cared for in an obstetric unit; and because the numbers would be considerably reduced there would be no problems with obstetric cover.

References:

Brocklehurst P. et al (2011) 'Perinatal and maternal outcomes by planned place of birth for healthy women with low risk pregnancies: the Birthplace in England national prospective cohort study' *BMJ* [343:bmj.d7400](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.d7400).

Public Accounts Committee Report on Maternity Services in England

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubacc/776/77602.htm>.

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