



NCT Policy Summary: National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (Wales)

The consultation on the National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (Wales) was launched on Thursday 14th October 2004. Having played a key role in lobbying for an NSF, the NCT is delighted to see that so many of the recommendations address important priorities. In particular, Chapters 2 & 3 of the Welsh NSF, which focus on 'Key Actions Universal To All Children' and 'Maternity Services' are relevant to the work of the NCT. The Welsh NSF promotes normality and choice, breastfeeding, services for pregnant women from disadvantaged or minority groups and communities and better birth environments.

What are National Service Frameworks (NSFs)?

NSFs were introduced in 1998 to tackle variations in standards of care and to achieve greater equity in the availability and quality of health services across England and Wales. NSFs have been used by the Government to 'modernise the NHS' and to devolve responsibility for health services to local service providers, allowing them to make decisions about how standards should be met.

The Children's NSF is a ten-year strategy, which establishes national standards to promote the health and well-being of children, young people and pregnant women across the health and social services. The NSF is intended to drive up the quality of services, promote health improvement and tackle health inequalities (though full implementation of the standards will take up to ten years). The NSF seeks to put service users at the centre of their care with the intention of promoting high-quality, women and child-centred services and personalised care for parents, children and their families.

The Children's NSF

The Welsh National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services establishes 21 standards and 203 key action points. Each key action is written to be specific and measurable; the organisations responsible for delivery are clearly identified. The NSF also lists a number of 'core key actions', which have been flagged for early delivery by March 2006. These 'core key actions' are low cost targets, or cost neutral targets, which are already being worked towards. The remaining key actions have costs attached to their implementation and will be attained over the NSF's ten year timeframe.

Chapter 3: Maternity Services

The Children's NSF includes a chapter on Maternity Services, which lists three standards for maternity services in Wales:

1. Child and Family Centred Services
Women and their partners are empowered to make informed choices throughout their pre-pregnancy and maternity care. Services are co-ordinated seamlessly between

hospital and community and between agencies, to maximise the health and well-being of families.

2. Access to Services

Maternity services are available to maximise the opportunity for all women to receive accessible care, focused upon maintaining and improving health and well-being. This requires that women are equal partners in planning the delivery of their care.

3. Quality of services

Maternity services are delivered in partnership with women and their families and strive to ensure safe and positive outcomes for women and babies at all times.

Key action points and statements in the Maternity Services Chapter of the NSF

Inclusive services

One of the key themes running through the NSF is the need to support pregnant women from disadvantaged groups and communities, who often find it difficult to access or maintain contact with traditional maternity services. Pregnant women, who are coping with substance misuse problems, mental health problems or a disability for example, will often have the poorest maternal and neonatal outcomes. The Maternity Services chapter of the Welsh NSF states: 'Maternity services need to be flexible to reach and maintain the confidence of those women who are marginalized by society...innovative ways should be used to address their needs' (page 53). There is a strong emphasis on prevention in the Maternity Chapter and the need to provide pregnant women with advice and support at the earliest opportunity.

Key actions:

Action point	Target	Who will action it	Date for implementation
3.11	There are specialist services available for young, pregnant teenage girls, such as parent education and support groups.	Local health boards (LHBs) NHS Trusts	Within ten years
3.12	Pregnant women who smoke have access to information and support to assist them with smoking cessation.	LHBs NHS Trusts	By March 2006
3.19	All pregnant women are offered an assessment for depression in the antenatal and postnatal period by appropriately trained health professionals, and there is access to specialised follow-up services if needed.	LHBs NHS Trusts	Within ten years

Promoting normality

The Maternity Chapter of the Welsh NSF makes clear that 'birth is a normal physiological process in which medical intervention should only be offered if it can be demonstrated that there is a proven benefit for the mother and/ or her child' (page 52). Support for normal childbirth runs throughout the Welsh NSF and key action points within the Maternity Chapter reflect this commitment.

Action point	Target	Who will action it	Date for implementation
3.24	Women receive one-to-one care (one woman receiving the dedicated time of a midwife) once labour is established.	LHBs NHS Trusts	Within ten years

3.25	All maternity units use the <i>All-Wales Clinical Pathway for Normal Labour</i> and undertake regular audit of its implementation	LHBs NHS Trusts	By March 2006
3.26	Maternity services follow any National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines relating to maternity services	LHBs NHS Trusts	Within ten years

Birth environment

The NCT is pleased to see birth environments included in the Maternity Chapter of the NSF. The NSF clearly implies that better birth environments can improve a pregnant woman's chances of having a normal birth: 'Creating the right environment in which women can give birth is important, not only from the point of view of improving the whole birth experience, but also has been shown to result in less instrumental deliveries' (page 53). The Welsh NSF cites key findings from the NCT's 'Creating a Better Birth Environment: An Audit Toolkit'. The action point in the NSF states:

Action point	Target	Who will action it	Date for implementation
3.4	Birth environments are regularly audited to ensure they optimise normality, privacy and dignity during labour and birth for the mother and birth partner(s).	LHBs NHS Trusts	Within ten years

Breastfeeding

The NCT welcomes the NSF's recognition that 'breastfeeding gives children the best start in life' (page 61). The NSF also recognises however, that more needs to be done to promote breastfeeding throughout Wales: 'The rate for breastfeeding initiation in Wales, at 46%, is one of the lowest in Europe. Early skin-to-skin contact for mothers with their healthy newborn babies promotes maternal-infant attachment, initiation and maintenance of breastfeeding and so should be encouraged. To support this aim, chapters 2 and 3 of the NSF outline a number of key action points to support the initiation and duration of breastfeeding.

Action	Target	Who will action it	Date for implementation
2.40	Local organisations work together to develop and implement a policy to encourage health-promoting infant nutrition, including initiation and maintenance of breastfeeding in line with <i>Investing in a Better Start, Promoting Breastfeeding in Wales</i> .	LHBs NHS Trusts Health care workers (HCW) Local authorities (LAs)	March 2006
3.19	All women are given help line contact numbers for infant feeding advice before discharge from hospital or early in the postnatal period if their baby is delivered at home.	NHS Trusts	March 2006
3.21	There is a multi-agency strategy to provide pre-pregnancy advice including nutrition and exercise, benefits of breastfeeding, sexual health and avoidance of substance	LHBs NHS Trusts LAs	Within ten years

	misuse, starting with school-aged young people.		
3.29	Women who choose to breastfeed their babies are provided with appropriate support to initiate and sustain breastfeeding	LHBs NHS Trusts HCW	Within ten years

Choice

The Welsh NSF only briefly discusses the need to provide pregnant women with choice over place of birth. The benefits of midwife-led centres are discussed, with the NSF acknowledging that midwifery-led birth centres can provide 'a family-centred, less technologically intrusive service' (page 56). The key action point on choice is:

Action point	Target	Who will action it	Date for implementation
3.2	Women are given information about locally available services to allow them to choose the most appropriate options for pregnancy care, birth and postnatal care. Women who choose home delivery as their birth option are supported in that choice, appropriate to the level of clinical risk.	LHBs NHS Trusts	Within ten years

Midwife-led care

The NCT welcomes the NSF's emphasis on midwife-led care. The NSF sets out a number of changes over the next ten years including the promotion of midwives as the first point of contact for pregnant women. Key action points here include:

Action point	Target	Who will action it	Date for implementation
3.5	Shortly after birth an identified lead professional, normally the named midwife, is responsible for reassessing individual needs and co-ordinating the postnatal care of all babies and women.	LHBs NHS Trusts	By March 2006
3.9	Women are able to access midwives in their community on a drop-in basis for pre-conceptual advice about developing healthy lifestyles, including taking folic acid supplements, and seeking maternity care as soon as pregnancy is confirmed. Early maternity care is promoted by the availability of midwives as the first point of contact for women	LHBs NHS Trusts	Within ten years
3.17	Mothers, babies and their families have access to services in the postnatal period from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A midwife for up to 28 days following birth; • A health visitor from 10-14 days 	LHBs NHS Trusts	By March 2006

	following birth; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other professionals according to assessed need. 		
3.24	Women receive one-to-one care (one woman receiving the dedicated time of a midwife) once labour is established	LHBs NHS Trusts	Within ten years

Maternity services liaison committees (MSLCs)

The NCT welcomes commitments within the Welsh NSF to support the work of MSLCs. Under the NSF, women and their partners will be given an opportunity to discuss their experiences of pregnancy and childbirth. This information will be sent to an MSLC with the intention of influencing service planning and delivery.

Action point	Target	Who will deliver it	Date for implementation
3.28	Women and their partners are offered the opportunity, by a named midwife in the postnatal period, to reflect on their experiences of pregnancy and childbirth. This information is sent to the Maternity Services Liaison Committee to inform service planning and delivery	LHBs NHS Trusts HCW	March 2006

Hand held notes

The NCT is pleased to see proposals to develop hand held notes in the NSF. The key action point here is:

Action point	Target	Who will deliver it	Date for implementation
3.23	There is an All Wales National Women-Held Maternity Record (to be developed by the Welsh Assembly Government) that is used by both women and professionals.	WAG LHBs NHS Trusts	Within ten years

Access to parent education

The NCT welcomes commitments within the Welsh NSF to support parent education. The NSF proposes to improve access to parent education services as well as making services more responsive to parents' needs. Key action points are included in chapters 2 & 3 of the NSF:

Action point	Target	Who will deliver it	Date for implementation
2.48	Children any Young People's Framework Partnership Plans include joint working arrangements to promote and deliver parenting education that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready access for parents/ carers to 	LHBs NHS Trusts LAs	Within ten years

	<p>evidence-based information about parenting issues through a range of appropriate media;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes designed with the participation of parents; • Service delivery in a range of settings including homes; • Finding creative solutions for barriers to participation, which may include transport, timing and availability of childcare. 		
2.49	<p>Parenting support programmes are available that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of universal and targeted services to meet assessed need; • Particular services for families who find themselves in difficult circumstances, such as support for parents of children with chronic illness, mental health or behaviour problems, services targeted at school-aged parents, and services for parents of disabled children or for those parents who are themselves disabled. • Provision of advice which is consistent, achieved through multi-agency training programmes. 	<p>LHBs NHS Trusts LAs</p>	<p>Within ten years</p>
3.14	<p>All pregnant women and their partners have access to parent education in their local areas, organised by an appropriately trained professional, and in a setting appropriate to their needs.</p>	<p>LHBs NHS Trusts</p>	<p>Within ten years</p>

For the full Welsh NSF, please go to:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites/documents/441/33519%20Main%20Doc%20Complete%20LoRes.pdf>

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The NCT wants all parents to have an experience of pregnancy, birth and early parenthood that enriches their lives and gives them confidence in being a parent.

Donations to support our work are welcome.

