

# Summary of the Maternity Commission Report

September 2024

In the UK, Black and Asian women, as well as those living in the most deprived areas, have a higher risk of dying during and up to six weeks after pregnancy than White women<sup>1</sup>.



## Black and Asian women have a higher risk of dying in pregnancy



<sup>1</sup> Statistics from MBRRACE-UK 'Saving Lives Improving Mothers' Care 2023' report

## Why the Commission was set up

It was set up to review the maternity care that families in Southwark get. It had the following aims:

- assess inequalities in maternity care access, experiences, and outcomes, focusing on parents from ethnic minorities and socially disadvantaged backgrounds
- evaluate how national recommendations for maternity services are being followed to improve access, experiences, and outcomes while reducing inequalities
- identify areas for further action and improvement for women in Southwark within the local maternity system

## All means all

Families come in many forms, and this Commission stands in solidarity with all parents and families in our borough. In making our recommendations we wish to be clear about our inclusiveness.

Find out more at [www.southwark.gov.uk/maternity-commission](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/maternity-commission)



# Who has been involved in the Southwark Maternity Commission

Over 750 residents and maternity care professionals have been involved in this work, including those shown below.



## Timeline of next steps for the Maternity Commission recommendations



- September 2024**  
Organisations commit to change
- October 2024 – April 2025**  
Development of the action plan
- April 2025 – September 2027**  
Implementation of action plan
- September 2027**  
Three-year interim review
- September 2029**  
Five-year final review

## Our work with the stakeholders outlined led to the development of five themes



Tackling discrimination and better supporting women with specific needs.



Making sure women are listened to and supported to speak up, whatever their language or background.



Providing women with the right information at the right time in the right way.



Joining up council and NHS services better around women's needs, and making sure care is consistent across borough borders.



Supporting the workforce to remain in their roles and be able to give compassionate and kind care for all mothers.

These themes were used to develop our ten recommendations, below and over the page.



## Southwark Maternity Commission recommendations

1 to 3 Government asks

### 1 Leadership in addressing racism that leads to unequal maternal health

Introduce clear, evidence-based policies that address racism and inequalities in maternity care and the wider healthcare system. Include review and improvement in existing frameworks and systems, such as the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard and ending charging migrants for maternity services.

### 2 Develop a new national way of reporting maternal health

Work with local authorities to introduce a way to record and respond to perinatal health data. Make sure all maternal health data is collected and reported in a standard way across all healthcare settings and focuses on ethnicity to highlight and address if people are getting unfair and different treatment.

### 3 Review the maternity workforce

Review the wider maternity healthcare system's capacity to support its workforce, with a focus on improving pay, conditions, and resilience. Provide healthcare professionals with training, resources, and a supportive work environment to improve compassion in care, particularly for Black and Asian mothers.

*Continued overleaf...*

# Southwark Maternity Commission recommendations continued

## 4 Evaluate the fairness of maternity services

Review current services for Southwark residents with the highest levels of need. Develop and improve new and existing services to make sure they work for people with complex, overlapping needs.

## 5 Listen to and empower families

Create an inclusive environment where all family members are heard and have the information to make sure their needs are met. Improve communication by creating and promoting accessible resources so that families are fully informed and can navigate the healthcare system.

## 6 Preparation and support before pregnancy

Southwark partners (Local Maternity and Neonatal System, local authorities, voluntary and community sector and maternity care providers) raise awareness together of the importance of getting ready for pregnancy. Use all services and contacts so that women arrive at maternity services in the best possible health (in particular those at risk of poorer maternal health outcomes).

## Give parents the right information, at the right time, in the right way

7 Southwark partners (Local Maternity and Neonatal System, local authority, voluntary and community sector and maternity care providers) work together on their communications across each stage of the perinatal period. Make sure women and their partners get the right, inclusive and culturally appropriate information.

## 8 Create a joined-up approach to families' needs between the NHS, south east London boroughs, and voluntary and community sector

Strengthen partnerships by creating a network for staff delivering care to Southwark residents. Share learning, facilitate integration across services and improve knowledge and resource sharing. Look for opportunities for co-commissioning with neighbouring boroughs to enhance and provide consistent services across borough borders.

## Southwark Council to review their role in maternity care

9 Look at their role in assurance and scrutiny of the maternity care system and empower system leaders to hold people to account. Together with local NHS trusts review, identify and close gaps in maternity services. Consider their role in housing and cost of living services, and in collaborating with local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector organisations.

## Review how feedback is dealt with

10 Work with NHS trusts to review how they identify, share and respond to patient and staff complaints, particularly ones about racial discrimination. Embedding a culture where staff are encouraged and supported to speak up. Make sure that the context of reviews is appropriate and develop an integrated, borough-wide response to review findings.