



# STANDARDS FOR MATERNITY SUPPORT WORKERS

## Foreword

It is over a decade since the role of the Maternity Support Worker was introduced in Northern Ireland and over that time, they have become an integral part of the maternity care team. The Maternity Support Worker undertakes delegated duties across both hospital and community settings which complements the care that midwives provide.

The Maternity Support Worker works as part of the maternity care team ensuring that women, babies and their families experience care tailored to their individual needs.

The Department of Health commissioned these Standards for Maternity Support Workers employed by Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland, and would like to acknowledge the role of the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council in leading the development of these Standards and associated resources in partnership with their Health and Social Care partners.

Mandating these Standards for Maternity Support Workers across the Health and Social Care Trusts will serve to recognise and support the valued contribution made by this cohort of healthcare staff.

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## Introduction

**These Standards apply to all Maternity Support Workers employed to support registered midwives employed in Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts across Northern Ireland.**

This document presents the Standards of care, conduct and behaviours required from Maternity Support Workers and informs employers, colleagues, women and their families who use our services and the public about these.

This document utilises the terms 'woman' or 'women', however these terms will also apply to people who do not identify as a woman and are pregnant or have given birth.

## Department of Health Mandate

**Maternity Support Workers make a valuable and important contribution to the delivery of high quality, woman-centred, midwifery care.**

Maternity Support Workers undertake delegated aspects of midwifery care and are supervised by a registered midwife.

The Department of Health (DoH) and HSC Trusts have a duty and a responsibility to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of women and their families who use our services.

The DoH fully endorses the Standards for Maternity Support Workers and requires that they are fully implemented and enforced across all HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland. HSC Trusts must monitor the implementation of the Standards and act where concerns have been raised. The DoH will monitor and seek assurances from HSC Trusts regarding their implementation.

The Standards are consistent with and complement the overarching Code of Conduct for HSC Employees (DoH, 2016)<sup>1</sup>. They will form part of employer's existing policies and procedures which Maternity Support Workers must adhere to.

Maternity Support Workers will be supported by their employers, to adhere to these Standards in delivering safe and effective woman-centred care, across all maternity care settings. They have a responsibility and a duty of care to ensure their conduct does not fall below these Standards and that no act or omission, within the sphere of their role, harms the safety and wellbeing of women and their families who use our services.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Health (2016) *Code of Conduct for HSC Employees*. Belfast: DoH.

## Employer's Responsibilities

**Employers of Maternity Support Workers are required to have systems and processes in place, including the provision of relevant training and ongoing development, which enables and supports these employees to achieve the Standards.**

### **The key principles for employers are as follows**

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Employers will:

- ensure that individuals recruited and employed as Maternity Support Workers have the necessary attributes for the role;
- provide training on these Standards so that Maternity Support Workers understand their role, accountabilities and responsibilities;
- have systems, processes and procedures in place, including Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) post outlines and personal development plans, appraisal and ongoing support/supervision, to enable Maternity Support Workers to meet the requirements of the Standards;
- provide access for Maternity Support Workers to education, training and development activities to develop and enhance their knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to their role;
- support Maternity Support Workers with opportunities for career development and ensure that adherence to the Standards is integrated into day-to-day practice within the organisation.

## What the Standards will mean for Maternity Support Workers

**The Standards for Maternity Support Workers are informed by the Nursing and Midwifery Council's Code (NMC, 2018)<sup>2</sup>.**

The registered midwife is accountable for the decision to delegate care and should only delegate care to a Maternity Support Worker who has completed the appropriate training and whom they deem competent to perform the delegated activity.

The Maternity Support Worker should understand their role, which includes the nature of the activity, what is expected of them, their limitations and, if circumstances change, when to seek advice. The Maternity Support Worker is accountable for their actions and decisions when undertaking a delegated activity. In addition, the registered midwife remains accountable for the overall management of women and their families in their care.

By following these Standards, Maternity Support Workers can be assured that they are working to the standard agreed by the DoH, which is essential in protecting women and their families who use our services.

This document sets out the Standards for Maternity Support Workers to:

- help them fulfil the requirements of their role;
- identify the learning and development to be undertaken to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours;
- enable them to do the right thing at all times.

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<sup>2</sup> Nursing & Midwifery Council (2018) *The code: professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates*. London: NMC.

## **What the Standards will mean for women and their families who use our services**

The Standards have been developed on the principle of protecting the public. They assist women and their families who use our services to understand the standards expected of Maternity Support Workers and their employers.

## **What will the Standards mean for registered midwives and their managers**

The Standards will help registered midwives and their managers understand the role of the Maternity Support Worker.

Line Managers will agree areas for the Maternity Support Worker's personal development, as part of their annual Personal Development Plan and ongoing support and supervision. This will be achieved by reviewing the individual's knowledge, skills and attributes in line with the Standards, the individual's job description and KSF post outlines.

**As a Maternity Support Worker you must adhere to these four Standards:**



### **STANDARD 1**

**Support the delivery of safe, woman-centred and compassionate care for women and their families who use our services.**



### **STANDARD 2**

**Communicate openly and honestly to promote the health and wellbeing of women and their families who use our services.**



### **STANDARD 3**

**Maintain your knowledge, skills and experience to enable you to do your job effectively, in order to improve the quality of care for women and their families who use our services.**



### **STANDARD 4**

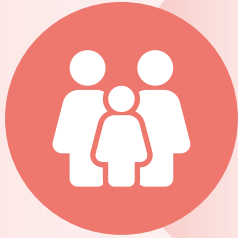
**Respect and protect at all times the right to confidentiality, privacy and dignity for women and their families who use our services.**





## Standards and Guidance Statements

Each of the four Standards has associated guidance statements which will help you to enhance your knowledge, skills and behaviours to continuously improve your performance and the care you provide for women and their families who use our services. It is essential that you familiarise yourself with these Standards and adhere to them whilst working within your organisation's policies and procedures.

**STANDARD 1:****Support the delivery of safe, woman-centred and compassionate care for women and their families who use our services.**

- 1.** Care for women and their families, who use our services, safely and compassionately at all times, enhancing woman-centred care and acting as an advocate for all those accessing our services.

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- 2.** Be accountable by making sure you can always answer for your actions and omissions, in relation to caring for women and their families who use our services.

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- 3.** Be honest with yourself and others and only carry out those activities within your remit and delegated to you, for which you have undertaken relevant training and education and have been deemed competent by a registered midwife.

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- 4.** Do not misuse your privileged position in order to neglect, harm, abuse or exploit women and their families who use our services.

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- 5.** Work collaboratively with colleagues across all disciplines to support woman-centred care.



**STANDARD 2:**  
**Communicate openly and honestly to promote the health and wellbeing of women and their families who use our services.**

- 1.** Communicate in an open, honest, accurate and timely way with women and their families who use our services, and with colleagues to support the delivery of woman-centred care.
- 2.** Document and maintain clear and accurate records relevant to the care you have provided to a woman using our services in line with your organisation's policies.
- 3.** Report any changes in or concerns about the condition of a woman who uses our services immediately to the registered midwife, who is responsible for the overall management of the woman's care.
- 4.** Always take complaints or concerns seriously and raise issues that you are concerned about with your line manager, in line with your organisation's policies.
- 5.** When communicating with women and their families who use our services and with colleagues, recognise the limitations of your role, knowledge and competence.
- 6.** Work in partnership with women and their families, explaining and discussing the care or treatment you intend to provide, and only continue if valid, informed consent is provided.

**STANDARD 3:**

**Maintain your knowledge, skills and experience to enable you to do your job effectively, in order to improve the quality of care for women and their families who use our services.**

1. Participate in training and personal development required by your employer and take responsibility for the achievement of the competencies essential for your role, in line with KSF and organisational requirements.

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2. In agreement with your line manager, ensure you comply with all statutory and mandatory training required for your role.

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3. Maintain an up-to-date record of your own training and development.

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4. Contribute to the learning and development of others where appropriate.

**STANDARD 4:**

**Respect and protect at all times the right to confidentiality, privacy and dignity for women and their families who use our services.**

- 1.** Do not discuss or share personal information about women and their families and their treatment inappropriately, or with anyone other than relevant colleagues in the healthcare team.

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- 2.** Uphold and promote the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion for women and their families who use our services and your colleagues, treating everyone fairly and without bias.

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- 3.** Establish and maintain clear and appropriate boundaries in your relationships with women and their families who use our services and with colleagues at all times. Always behave in a professional manner.

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- 4.** Refuse to accept any offers of loans, gifts, benefits or hospitality from anyone in your care, or anyone close to them, which may be seen to compromise your professional integrity.

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- 5.** Do not use social media to share information about the environment you work in, or the women and their families for whom you care.



Department of  
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Mánnystrie O Poustie

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