

# Perinatal Mental Health Matrix: improving NHS Perinatal Mental Health Services

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YEARS OF  
NICE  
1999-2019

An online self-assessment Matrix was designed for services working with women with or at risk of developing perinatal mental health problems. This enabled maternity, health visiting, secondary care mental health and psychology services, across the NHS England South region, to benchmark performance against NICE’s antenatal and postnatal mental health quality standard (QS115).

*“We’re finding the Matrix really easy to use and love the live dashboard. It’s made more of a difference than any other audit and it’s led to our next QI project.”*

**Gloria Aldridge**, Perinatal Clinical Nurse Manager for Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (Milton Keynes)



## What we did and why

Improving Perinatal Mental Health (PMH) is an NHS Priority. A regional mapping exercise in 2016 identified a lack of service performance evaluation and a systematic inability to compare NHS service against national standards with a significant regional variation in provision.

Key drivers:

- Improve coordination between local services for women with complex PMH needs.
- Improve quality of services working with women during the perinatal period.
- Improve accountability of services’ performance.
- Improve equity of service provision across the region.

An online self-assessment matrix was created to generate performance data on a live dashboard, enabling services to:

- Enhance performance transparency.
- Develop in response to local need.
- Map trends over time.
- Use competitive drivers for improvements through benchmarking against counterpart services.

The Matrix was developed in Thames Valley and funded by NHS England South Region to implement across the south of England.

## Outcomes and impact

The Matrix live dashboard is accessible to all participants and performance can be compared at the level of individual services, Local Maternity Systems and NHS region. It provides data on the actual (rather than estimated) demand on local services.

The project has widespread engagement across Thames Valley and participation is expanding across the NHS South regions.

Matrix findings have triggered quality improvement projects including:

- IT systems updates to facilitate data collection relevant to QS115.
- Trust-wide review of valproate prescription for women.
- Plans in mental health and maternity services to evidence shared clinical decision-making with women.
- Updated maternity clinical records to record enquiry into emotional well-being, to improve identification of women with mental health problems.
- Enhanced access to assessment and treatment in IAPT services.

## What we learnt

There is great enthusiasm among frontline clinicians to improve services for women with PMH problems.

- The Matrix can empower clinicians to influence service developments by providing direct access to performance data.
- Regional leadership was essential to obtain trusts’ commitment to the Matrix.
- Relationships within the local PMH network were key to engaging clinicians.
- Regular piloting and testing by network members and ongoing development of the Matrix ensures the Matrix is user-friendly for busy clinical staff and meets organisations needs.
- Aligning the Matrix with national monitoring drivers reduces the reporting burden for specialist PMH services.
- The Matrix identifies areas of strength and areas for improvement - this was essential in facilitating trusts’ commitment to transparency and sharing performance data.

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