

PE2017/F: Extend the period that specialist perinatal mental health support is made available beyond one year

Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport written submission, 27 February 2025

Thank you for your letter of 31 January on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee. Following your meeting held on 22 January to discuss the period that specialist perinatal mental health support is made available, you requested an update on the following issues:

- a specific publication date for the report from NHS National Services Scotland on the options appraisal process on mother and baby unit provision in Scotland
- a clear timeline for the draft service specification for perinatal mental health services
- information on whether any of the £85,000 for Intensive Treatment Services has been allocated and the Scottish Government's plans to allocate any remaining funding by the end of this financial year

I am pleased to provide an update to your specific points below:

1. Publication of the Mother and Baby Unit Options Appraisal

As you know, I have been considering the Mother and Baby Unit Options Appraisal from NHS National Services Scotland. This has been impacted by financial restrictions, which prevented new capital spend by Boards.

As those pressures may begin to ease somewhat, I would hope the Options Appraisal could be published in coming months.

2. Timeline for a draft service specification for perinatal mental health services

The Joint Strategic Board for Child and Family Mental Health has identified the development of a service specification for clinical perinatal services as a priority area within one of their workstreams.

A Project Specific Group has been established to progress the writing of the specification. In addition to COSLA and Scottish Government officers, membership includes representatives from:

- Professional groups working in NHS perinatal mental health services;

- Professionals working in relevant local authority services (Social Work and Early Years);
- Perinatal Mental Health Network Scotland (PMHNS);
- Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland

The Group has sought input from those with lived and living experience to ensure it meets the needs of women and families in Scotland. It is incredibly important to us that service provision is led by the needs of women, young children and families, building on good practice and learning from positive and negative experiences of current services.

The Project Specific Group has met 3 times so far and will take their draft specification to the Joint Strategic Board on 26 March for their approval, before it is ultimately submitted to me for sign off. We anticipate that the specification will be published this year.

3. Intensive Treatment Services in the North of Scotland

As you mentioned, we allocated an initial £85,000 to develop Intensive Treatment Services in the North of Scotland to assist in delivering care to the most severely ill women in the perinatal period, closer to home. I also secured an additional £205,000 of funding, bringing the total investment to £290,000 in this financial year.

We have allocated part of this money to NHS Grampian, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde and NHS Lothian, and look to them to make progress. The aim is to further support regional provision which will enable increased joint working around admissions and support care in remote and rural areas.

I remain committed to improving access to mental health provision for women, infants and their families throughout pregnancy and during the postnatal period and appreciate the Committee's continued interest in this area of important work.

With best wishes,

MAREE TODD MSP