



**LOCAL SUPERVISING AUTHORITY
MIDWIFERY OFFICERS FORUM
UNITED KINGDOM**

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION
2008-2011**



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FOREWORD

Safety and quality has to be the aim of every midwife and maternity service in the UK. The avoidance, prevention and mitigation of adverse outcomes, events or injuries stemming from midwifery and maternity care are integral to the role of local supervising authority midwifery officers. In a time of rapid and continuing change for midwives this strategic document provides valuable cohesion and direction for supervision of midwives across the UK.

This is the first time that such a strategy has been set for the UK wide context and it is to the credit of the UK LSAMO members that this has been achieved. They have not forgotten their roots in supporting midwives to continually improve the care they provide. Midwives working in any part of the UK can rightly expect the same standard of supervision and therefore maintain their confidence in their skills and be more likely to remain in practice. The focus on supporting and involving women in this strategy is welcome, and will increase the opportunity for women and their families to gain consistent support from supervisors and local supervising authorities regardless of the location or nation.

Local supervising authority midwifery officers are in a unique place to advise commissioners and providers of maternity services whether they are part of the NHS or within the private sector. Their independence from service provision enables them to offer a balanced view that stems from ensuring the safety and well being of the public. This challenging strategy will enable LSAMOs to continue to influence everyone involved in maternity services to ensure high quality midwifery care for all women and babies in the UK.

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INTRODUCTION

Building on the achievements of the past three years, the Local Supervising Authority Midwifery Officers (LSAMOs) are keen to move forward and develop a cohesive United Kingdom (UK) wide approach to the statutory function, with shared principles and a common approach to achieving the standards set within the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Midwives rules and standards (NMC 2004). This strategy describes the plan for what will be achieved by the LSAMO Forum UK (the Forum) over the next three years.

This strategy is designed as a blueprint for action for the Forum across the UK. Underpinned by a statutory requirement to protect the public through statutory supervision of midwives, the strategy sets out the challenges and drivers for the Forum for the next three years and clearly highlights the priority areas that will be addressed.

As a minimum, this document details clear goals and actions relating to achievement of the standards set by the NMC in the Midwives rules and standards (NMC 2004). It goes further however, and defines ways in which LSAMOs and the Forum, will empower midwives through proactive, supportive supervision, to enhance standards of midwifery practice and hence improve care delivery. The strategy also describes how the Forum will engage more fully in partnership working with midwifery colleagues, other health care professionals, service users and wider stakeholder groups, to ensure protection of the public and to facilitate delivery of midwifery services that meet the needs and expectations of the women who use them.

Teamwork created this strategy and teamwork will enable the goals within it to be met. The sixteen LSA Midwifery Officers in the UK work closely together to share information and good practice. Working together and with other stakeholders ensures that there is a consistent and equitable approach to achieving the standards set by the NMC. This is the first time a UK wide strategy has been produced by the LSAMO Forum UK and as such, it aims to strengthen equitable statutory supervision of midwives, professional midwifery practice and delivery of safe care for women and babies.



THE LOCAL SUPERVISING AUTHORITY

Each Local Supervising Authority (LSA) is responsible for ensuring that statutory supervision of all midwives, as required in the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 (HMSO 2001) and the Nursing and Midwifery Council's Midwives rules and standards (NMC 2004) is exercised to a satisfactory standard within its geographical boundary. Each LSA has an appointed a LSAMO to carry out this function.

The role of the LSAMO is unique: it does not represent the interests of either the commissioners or providers of NHS maternity services and therefore should be independent in the function of the role, although informed by the regulatory guidance issued by the NMC.


CHALLENGES AND DRIVERS 2008 - 2011

Government policies on healthcare and healthcare reform, together with meeting the standards set by the NMC, are key drivers for the next three years. Potential legislative change may result in fundamental differences to the way in which midwifery and other healthcare professions are regulated. A challenge for the midwifery profession and LSAMOs in particular, will be to demonstrate the pivotal role of statutory supervision of midwives through the governance mechanisms, including audit and evaluation processes.

Within healthcare generally, including maternity services, there is a growing emphasis on the needs and expectations of the public. Women expect choices and outcomes that may present challenges in an increasingly complex infra-structure of healthcare providers with finite resources. Whilst the baseline is safe and competent care and statutory supervision of midwives plays a large part in this, there appears to be too little public awareness of the role supervision plays in protection of the public.

The challenge for the Forum therefore, will be to engage further with women and stakeholder groups to enhance a realistic understanding of maternity services. This will raise awareness of the existence of the professional standards of practice and statutory supervision of midwives. It will also increase the involvement of stakeholders in the setting of policies and the auditing of standards. Raising the profile of statutory supervision of midwives and the role of the LSAMO and Supervisors of Midwives, is instrumental in meeting this challenge.

Modernisation of services is leading to skill mix changes and new roles for healthcare professionals. Professional boundaries may be blurred in some sectors with a good example being midwives providing pathways of care for socially excluded women



within a multi-professional team. Some midwives in the future may not be employed directly by the NHS, but by other public sectors such as education, social services or other private providers. Whilst midwives have traditionally described themselves as 'autonomous practitioners of normal midwifery', many have resisted 'specialisation' and the adoption of roles normally the remit of others, often doctors or nurses. Some midwives may now choose to embrace the opportunities that new roles and the commissioning processes offer. Working lives have become more flexible and maintaining a personal work/life balance can prove challenging. However complex the role and practice of a midwife, statutory supervision must underpin safe practice and the LSAMO must strive to ensure that it does so within an ever changing and complex environment.

The midwifery profession needs dynamic leaders who have the vision, drive and charisma to take the profession forward as equal partners with other professions in the delivery of maternity services. Leaders need to be able to influence policy, commissioning and practice, determine priorities, enable change and be seen to be making a demonstrable difference.

The LSAMOs are in a pivotal and unique position to influence and identify levers and so influence stakeholder relationships within the midwifery profession. The nature of their work enables them to advise and influence policy, practice and standards on many levels yet much of their work is often invisible to the majority of midwives and others. LSAMOs will use the ongoing need for leadership in midwifery and their own unique role as drivers to identify, support and champion other midwifery leaders; to work with and influence those in leadership roles and to demonstrate leadership within their own role.

The Forum is not a statutory organisation and this poses a key challenge for the group. It raises issues of identity, recognition and authority with other groups and stakeholders. However, the Forum aims to achieve the goals within this strategy and thus strengthen statutory supervision of midwives across the United Kingdom. Work of the Forum in 2008-2011 will be driven by the need to raise its profile; for it to be recognised as a key strategic group and to be first point of reference for advice on specific issues relating to statutory supervision of midwives as well as on midwifery practice and maternity services in general.



PRIORITIES 2008 – 2011

Priority areas for LSAMOs and the Forum arise from the predicted challenges and drivers over the next three years. The priority areas are reflected in the goals and actions within this strategy and include:

- Enhancing communication links between the LSAMO Forum UK and other stakeholder groups, thereby enhancing public protection
- Demonstrating the pivotal role of statutory supervision of midwives through the interface with the clinical governance framework, thereby increasing safety of maternity services
- Raising the profile of statutory supervision of midwives, the role of a Supervisor of Midwives, the LSA and the LSAMO
- Demonstrating the evidence, audit trail and trend analysis of the standards of statutory supervision of midwives and midwifery practice
- Increasing user involvement in the work of the LSAs/LSAMOs
- Continuing to meet the standards set by the NMC
- Identifying and supporting leaders in midwifery and developing the leadership role of LSAMO
- Promoting and facilitating stronger governance links with maternity service providers and commissioners
- Promoting active recruitment and preparation of new Supervisors of Midwives, to ensure that NMC standard minimum ratios are maintained, but also to ensure succession planning
- Providing opportunities for Supervisors of Midwives to expand their knowledge and understanding of the statutory processes and to understand the role of a LSAMO
- Supporting the development of a work plan for the Forum.



STRATEGIC GOAL ONE

NATIONAL STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE

Promote and facilitate equitable and effective statutory supervision of midwives across the UK, to support competent midwives and a safe service, which encourages women-centred care.

ACTION

- On an annual basis demonstrate, through audit processes and methodologies, that the standards for the LSA as defined by the NMC framework have been met.
- Review policies and guidelines for the statutory supervision of midwives ensuring that they meet NMC standards and guidance and through the Forum, adopt the policies and guidance on a UK wide basis.
- Examine the fifty four standards relating to LSAs, LSAMOs and Supervisors of Midwives contained within the Midwives rules and standards (NMC 2004) to ensure consistent interpretation and develop a plan for implementation and maintenance of the standards.
- Benchmark audit findings to ensure consistency of the evidence that demonstrates that NMC standards have been met.



STRATEGIC GOAL TWO

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Have a robust mechanism for auditing statutory supervision of midwives within maternity services, to ensure compliance with the Midwives rules and standards (NMC 2004) and with the LSAMO Forum UK Guidance.

ACTION

- Apply a core audit tool, which demonstrates evidence of compliance with the LSA standards for statutory supervision of midwives (LSANF 2005). Utilise a portfolio of methodologies to achieve this.
- Gather evidence to demonstrate compliance with the standards issued by the NMC, in preparation for NMC audit visits to assess and assure quality within each LSA.
- Comply with the completion of core information, which maintains the anonymity of contributors and enables LSAMOs to benchmark standards.
- To ensure accurate data when providing workforce and activity information in order to inform best evidence analysis.
- Be an integral partner in the clinical governance agenda within the LSA and support Supervisors of Midwives to be pivotal in the clinical governance strategy within their own maternity service.
- Encourage Supervisors of Midwives and midwives to actively contribute to and utilise up-to-date information to enable clinically effective, evidence-based practice.
- Encourage the sharing of good practice, innovation and networking by initiating regular learning opportunities for Supervisors of Midwives.
- Support a UK wide appropriate framework for statutory supervision of midwives, by the provision of policies and guidance, which meet the Midwives rules and standards (NMC 2004).
- Provide advice and support to Supervisors of Midwives in the investigation of practice concerns and serious untoward incidents, and/or where sub-optimal practice or professional misconduct is alleged, irrespective of the clinical outcome.

STRATEGIC GOAL THREE

NETWORKS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Actively promote statutory supervision of midwives by encouraging engagement with maternity services stakeholders.

ACTION

- Participate in national and local working groups to promote the value of statutory supervision of midwives as a means of public protection.
- Engage with maternity service user forums and external stakeholder groups.
- Contribute to maintaining the profile of the LSA function through written publications and presentations at national and international conferences.
- Organise and attend local and national conferences to promote statutory supervision of midwives.
- Ensure distribution of the Forum newsletter and Annual Report of progress against this strategy.
- Ensure ongoing professional development opportunities for Supervisors of Midwives.
- Support Higher Education Institutions with midwifery curriculum planning, validation events, and quality assurance of pre and post registration midwifery education programmes.
- Engage and influence local commissioners/Health Boards regarding the provision of maternity services.
- Ensure effective communication links exist between and across LSA boundaries through the Forum..
- Ensure local networks of support and advice are available to Supervisors of Midwives.
- Ensure that there are network links between the Forum and key stakeholders.
- Develop an LSAMO/Statutory Supervision of Midwives website



STRATEGIC GOAL FOUR

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

LSAMOs will provide professional leadership at an international, national, local and individual level.

ACTION

- Publicise, promote and influence understanding of the role, relationships and accountability of LSAMOs and Supervisors of Midwives.
- Provide support and guidance to Supervisors of Midwives.
- Use LSAMO UK wide midwifery 'intelligence' for the protection of mothers and their babies.
- Develop policies and guidelines and implement the standards for Supervisors of Midwives.
- Develop the leadership skills of Supervisors of Midwives.
- LSAMOs to influence and contribute to national projects concerning midwifery care, ensuring service users are actively engaged in the LSA audits and work of the Forum..
- Empower and support Supervisors of Midwives.
- Advise maternity services on skill mix and workforce profiles where there is a potential impact on the protection of the public.



STRATEGIC GOAL FIVE

REGULATION

Ensure the inter-relationship between regulation, professional accountability, midwifery practice and statutory supervision of midwives, in order to protect women and babies.

ACTION

- Through the statutory supervision of midwives framework, monitor compliance with the Midwives rules and standards (NMC 2004).
- Expand the LSA guidelines/policies for statutory supervision of midwives in the UK and adopt them on an UK wide basis.
- Collaborate with the NMC in relation to regulation of midwives in the UK.
- Ensure midwives are fit to practise:
 - Work with Health Authorities/Health Boards, commissioners/providers of the pre registration, return to midwifery practice and midwifery adaptation and compensatory programmes.
 - Collaborate with Higher Education Institutions to ensure student midwives are exposed to the positive benefits of statutory supervision of midwives.
 - Ensure systems are in place for practising midwives to provide safe, competent, contemporary midwifery care which enables NMC continuing Registration.
- Determine eligibility for appointment as a Supervisor of Midwives of those midwives nominated to the LSA for appointment.
- Assess the competencies of existing Supervisors of Midwives in relation to NMC Standards for the preparation and practice of supervisors of midwives (NMC 2006).
- Disseminate and monitor the application of the NMC Standards for supervised practice of midwives (NMC 2007).



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APPENDIX – FUNCTION OF THE LSA

Article 42 and 43 (3) of the Nursing & Midwifery Order 2001 requires the NMC to issue rules and standards and guidance for the exercise of the LSA function and Supervision of Midwives.

Each LSA is responsible for ensuring that Statutory Supervision of all Midwives practising within its area is undertaken to a satisfactory standard by;

- Providing a framework of support for supervisory and midwifery practice.
- Receiving Intention to Practise notifications from all midwives practising within the LSA boundary.
- Ensuring that each midwife meets the statutory requirements for practice.
- Accessing initial and continuing education and training for Supervisors of Midwives.
- Leading the development of standards and audit of supervision.
- Determining whether to suspend a midwife from practice, in accordance with Rule 5 of the Midwives rules and standards (NMC 2004).
- Investigating cases of alleged impairment of fitness to practise.

LSA Midwifery Officers are available to give professional advice to Supervisors of Midwives, midwifery and Trust managers, educators and commissioners on a wide range of subjects. They provide leadership to the midwifery profession in their localities and develop strong professional networks for Supervisors of Midwives and for other frontline staff in women's services.

The role is impartial in that it does not represent the interests of either the employers or commissioners. The LSA Midwifery Officer is therefore able to provide expert advice based on professional considerations. Regular contact with Supervisors of Midwives in frontline services and with the LSAMO Forum UK, gives an individual LSAMO detailed knowledge of contemporary issues. From this perspective, alongside her knowledge of statutory supervision of midwives, she is also able to contribute informed advice on issues such as structures for local maternity services, manpower planning, student midwife numbers and post registration education opportunities.

External relations are pivotal to their role and subgroups of the LSAMO Forum UK spearhead a programme of work to maintain the profile of the LSA function. The initiatives include:

- Writing for midwifery publications.
- Production of LSAMO Forum UK newsletters.
- Web-sites providing information for service users, midwives and other stakeholders about the Supervision of Midwives and the function of the LSA.
- Information stands at conferences and exhibitions.
- Bi-annual national LSA conference.
- Midwifery Journal Editorial Board.
- Representation on national working groups, and participation in government initiatives
- Presenting at national and international conferences on the subject of protection of the public.



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