

The impact of COVID-19 on maternal deaths

HSIB published its report on Maternal deaths during the first wave of COVID-19. The report takes a closer look at the impact that COVID-19 had during the initial period of March to May 2020.

16 June 2022

HSIB published its report into Maternal deaths during the first wave of COVID-19. The report [National Learning Report: Maternal death: learning from maternal death investigations during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) | [HSIB](#) takes a closer look at the impact that COVID-19 had during the initial period of March to May 2020.

HSIB considered 20 maternal deaths which occurred during this time frame to see whether the pandemic played a part and to consider how this could be addressed should we find ourselves in this situation again. In this report HSIB identify 7 key themes which include changing guidance and confusing messaging, unprecedented demand for health services and the pressures this placed on staff and the barrier created by the use of PPE.

HSIB spoke with the families of the women to understand their concerns to help them make recommendations for the future should we find ourselves in this scenario again. A strong message which came out from those family conversations was the impact of the restriction on women being able to take partners/family/friends to appointments or indeed to have them with them during the early part of labour. The requirement to attend alone left women without an advocate in what is already a vulnerable and emotional situation, further heightened by fears around the pandemic.

The report also identified an element of racial disparity in the figures and identifies that more work needs to be done to understand the increased risk of maternal deaths for women of Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and with higher socio-economic deprivation.

While it is important to remind ourselves that fortunately maternal deaths in the UK are rare, occurring in fewer than 10 per 100,000 pregnancies any baby left without a mother is one baby too many and so the work done by HSIB in reviewing the impact on maternal deaths from the pandemic can only be a positive step to seeking to reduce that figure even more.

Although the HSIB report is centred around maternal deaths in a pandemic the recommendations surrounding clearer communication with women, especially from the specific communities and backgrounds identified above are important for all providers of maternity services.

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