Health: Maternity Services

Written Answers

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health

(1) what recent assessment he has made of progress made by his Department in implementing the (a) four national choice guarantees and (b) other policies set out in its publication, Maternity Matters: choice, access and continuity of care in a safe service;

(2) with reference to his Department's publication, Maternity Matters: choice, access and continuity of care in a safe service, published in April 2007, what changes have been made to the roles and responsibilities set out in part four of that publication following the implementation of the reforms under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Norman Lamb (The Minister of State, Department of Health; North Norfolk, Liberal Democrat)

It is for the national health service locally to determine how best to implement the commitments set out in Maternity Matters. Prior to April 2013, strategic health authorities (SHAs) were responsible for performance managing primary care trusts (PCTs). At the end of 2009, SHAs reported that 99% of PCTs were able to offer women a choice of how to access maternity care, a choice of the type of antenatal care, choice of place of birth and 92% of PCTs were able to offer choice of place of postnatal care.

The National Audit Office recently conducted a value for money audit of maternity services. Its report, "Maternity Services in England", published in November 2013, assessed progress against the Maternity Matters commitments and highlighted improvements and identified areas where further progress is needed.

In the reformed health and care system, the Department, as system steward, has set national priorities for maternity services in the mandates for NHS England and Health Education England (HEE), and in the NHS and Public Health Outcomes Frameworks. NHS England and HEE are required to provide assurances to the Department against the delivery of these priorities.

Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are responsible for commissioning, maternity services. NHS England provides guidance to CCGs on the commissioning of high quality maternity services in line with the policy framework set by the Department.

Information on the roles and responsibilities in the new system following the reforms instituted under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 can be found in the Department's publication "The Health and Care System Explained". It is available at:

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