

FAQs | Maternity Commissioning Framework

What's the challenge?

Right now, not everyone gets the same level of care when they're having a baby, which leads to unfair health outcomes. Significant, preventable inequities affect whānau Māori, Pacific People, and Tāngata Whaikaha (disabled people). Despite efforts, perinatal mortality rates have barely shifted in the past 15 years - each year, around 650 babies and 10 mothers die during or shortly after pregnancy, resulting in a perinatal mortality rate of 3.58 per 1,000 babies. So here's the big challenge - how do we do better?

What are you doing about it?

We're setting up a team of maternity care experts called the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to design a new commissioning framework for maternity services. This framework will be used to enable regional commissioning that will ensure services are easier to access and work better for everyone.

Why a commissioning framework?

Section 14 of the [Pae Ora \(Healthy Futures\) Act 2022](#) outlines the responsibilities of Health New Zealand. One of the key functions is to develop and implement commissioning frameworks and models to ensure services are provided at national, regional and local levels. It also includes the responsibility to set requirements and specifications for publicly funded services.

What is the Maternity Commissioning Framework?

The Maternity Commissioning Framework consists of two key parts. The first part is the Components of Care—what every family should get, like support during pregnancy, the birth, and after the baby is born. The second part is the Commissioning Principles which are like the instructions—they tell us how to put the services together.

What are the Components of Care?

The Components of Care outline the service that every person is entitled to during their maternity journey. This includes everything from pregnancy support through to postnatal care, ensuring that every family has access to the essential care they need, no matter where they are.

What are Commissioning Principles?

Commissioning Principles guide how services can be purchased and delivered. They provide flexibility for regional and local needs, ensuring services are responsive to families and communities, while still maintaining national standards for care.

When will we see changes?

The first places to start using the new approach will begin by 2026 though we have identified some areas that may be ready to begin testing changes before then.

Frequently asked questions

Who is part of this change?

The Technical Advisory Group is a group of experts including midwives, doctors, health planners, and consumers. They will work together to figure out what's needed to make maternity care better and fairer.

What kind of people will be in the Technical Advisory Group?

We need people who are good at listening to different ideas, finding middle ground, and coming up with creative solutions. They'll need to be comfortable thinking in new ways and challenging the old systems—all to help families get the care they deserve.

How will this help families?

Families will know exactly what care they can expect, and services will be designed to fit the needs of each community. So whether you live in a big city or a small town, you'll get care that feels right for you.

How will services be funded?

In the past, primary maternity services have been funded via the Primary Maternity Services Notice with some districts also providing a community midwifery service. In alignment with the Pae Ora Act, regions will be responsible for designing and funding all services. This reflects the role of the regions in the new health system.

Will the old way of working still exist?

Midwifery-led care is a cornerstone of maternity services in Aotearoa. Any changes will enhance and support the care currently delivered. The focus is on the underpinning enablers to maternity care, and better connection between services and supports. Midwives will continue to be able to claim under the Primary Maternity Services Notice if they choose to.

How can I stay involved or give feedback?

If you're interested in the changes, you can [sign up here for updates](#) or share your thoughts at any time. We'll make sure there are chances for you to have your say along the way.

How does this fit into the larger Kahu Taurima work programme?

The Maternity Commissioning Framework is part of the Kahu Taurima work programme, which aims to create a more equitable and seamless system for maternity and early years care. This reform seeks to ensure that all whānau can access the care they need at every stage, with services designed around their specific needs and circumstances.

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