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Public consultation on postnatal care guidelines

As I take on the role as editor of the *British Journal of Midwifery* during Alexandra's maternity leave, clear and effective guidance on postnatal care for health professionals, including midwives, seems of particular importance and relevance. It also seems clear to me that consideration of the enormous changes that have been made to these services during the COVID-19 pandemic is extremely important when publishing new guidelines.

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2020a) has released a draft update to its guidance on postnatal care, originally published in 2006. The new guidelines are out for public consultation until the end of November and are expected to be published in April 2021 (NICE, 2020b). The guidance is based on a series of evidence reviews, conducted prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. NICE has encouraged the submissions during the consultation to include any changes that may need to be made to the guidelines, in light of the pandemic.

The draft guidelines include recommendations on the organisation of postnatal care and advice on ensuring effective communication both between health professionals and to the women receiving postnatal care. There is also guidance on care of the woman, including how and when to conduct an assessment of her health and wellbeing, and the importance of the inclusion of a discussion on areas such as what to expect from the postnatal period, physical activity, contraception and safeguarding concerns.

The specific guidelines on postnatal care for the baby include completing an examination of the baby within 72 hours of birth and at 6–8 weeks after birth. The completion of this postnatal check at 6–8 weeks became a contractual requirement for GPs earlier this year (NHS England, 2020). Planning baby feeding is also recommended, including how to encourage breastfeeding.



Suzannah Allkins
Acting Editor

This year has resulted in rapid and widespread changes to the delivery of healthcare services, including in midwifery. It is my hope that participation in the public consultation on these draft guidelines will allow the final published version to reflect the ongoing situation in midwifery and postnatal care, in the face of the changes that the pandemic has imposed. **BJM**

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