

# How Virtual & Remote Care + Changed Maternity Care Practices During The Pandemic



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Prof. Jane Sandall, Prof. Laura A. Magee,  
& on behalf of the KTF Changing Maternity Care Studies Teams



# Pregnancy, Childbirth, & COVID-19: Context

**NewStatesman**

INTERNATIONAL 14 SEPTEMBER 2020

## Labouring alone: How some maternity services failed pregnant women in the Covid-19 age

Pubs and offices may have reopened, but in some NHS trusts the strictest pandemic restrictions on maternity wards were still in place this month.

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## 'Giving birth alone left me feeling abandoned': Why the government change on birthing partners is so important

As the NHS lifts strict regulations banning partners from attending maternity appointments, **Hannah Fearn** reveals the realities of giving birth alone during the pandemic

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## Covid-19: Mary Agyapong's widower says pregnant women have been 'neglected'

Evening Standard

## Pregnant during a pandemic: baby, it was nearly too much to bear

Midwife appointments by phone. Scans all alone. Having a baby in 2020 could be lonely and terrifying, says Rosamund Urwin, who gave birth three weeks ago

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## Covid-19: Pandemic blamed for lack of midwife support

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## Nurses and female healthcare workers most likely to suffer 'mental distress' during Covid crisis

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Covid deaths halve in a fortnight as new cases down 80% since New Year

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## 'It's torture': Pregnancy and giving birth alone during Covid-19 restrictions

Giving birth can be scary enough. Giving birth during the pandemic can be even scarier.

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DISPATCHES FROM THE COVID-19 FRONTLINE

## 'I am an NHS midwife in the coronavirus crisis. New mothers are scared - the focus has moved to Covid-19'

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## COVID 19: Seven out of 10 midwives abused due to coronavirus maternity rules

Midwives and maternity support workers report a catalogue of abuse, including visitors refusing to wear masks.

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## Maternity staff facing extreme burnout over staff shortages and longer busier shifts, warn healthcare leaders

Exclusive: Professionals argue coronavirus crisis will lead to rise in doctors, nurses and midwives suffering post-traumatic stress disorder

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## Covid: Being alone in pregnancy due to hospital rules

NIHR

Applied Research Collaboration  
South London

NHS

Guy's and St Thomas'  
NHS Foundation Trust

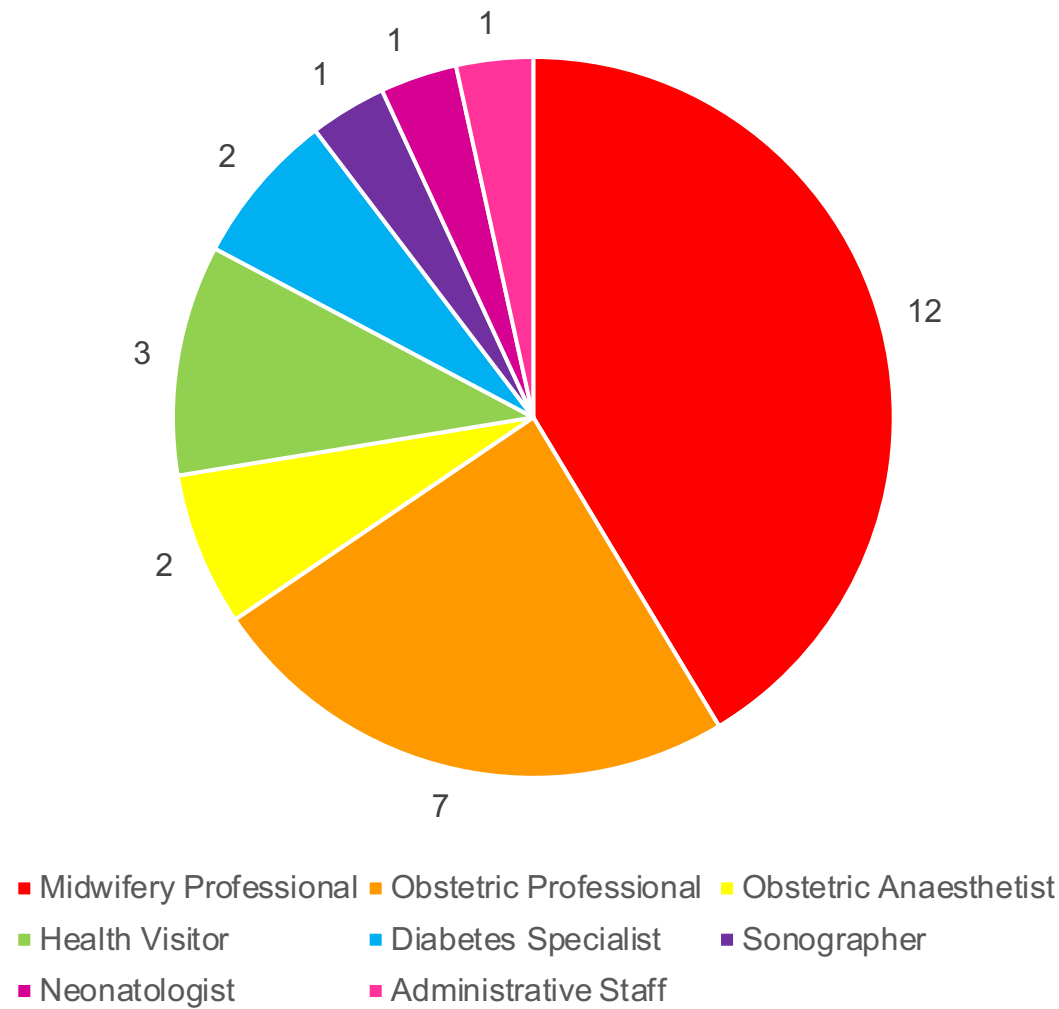
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# Understanding the impact of the pandemic on maternity services – The Changing Maternity Care Studies

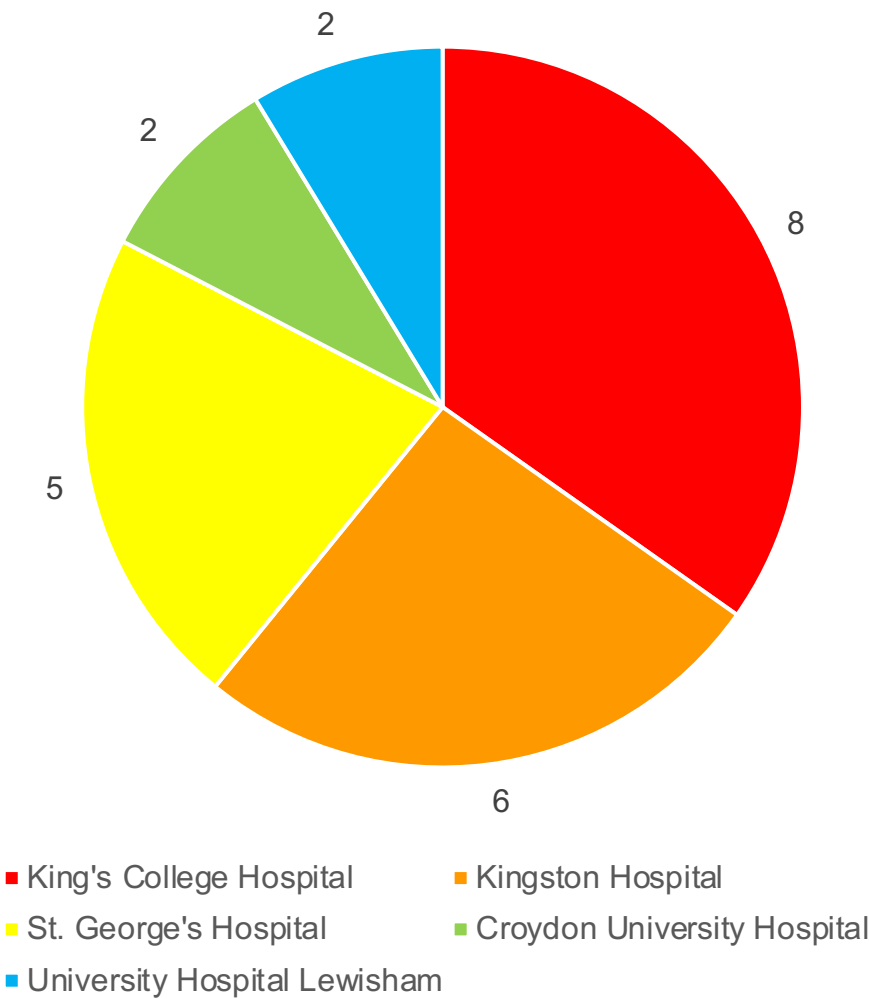
- We aimed to:
  - Understand the psycho-social experiences and the experiences of service reconfiguration that women had when using maternity care services during the pandemic.
  - Understand the processes and experiences of reconfiguring maternity care services from healthcare professionals.
- The project is divided into two arms:
  - Interview study with women who gave birth in South London between March and August 2020.
  - Interview study with healthcare professionals at Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust involved in delivering maternity care during the pandemic.

# Participants in the studies

Staff Profession



Hospitals which Women Attended



# Women's study – first analysis: service reconfiguration

“The call was very like, ‘Here’s five minutes, we are going to tick these boxes and hang up...’”

“...I hope that’s changed. That was them getting used to: how can I conduct a phone appointment? How can I build rapport with somebody and listen to them over the phone in the way I would have done if I had a cup of tea at their house? That is the kind of thing that will hopefully evolve.”

(Participant 016, age 36, 2<sup>nd</sup> baby)



# Women's study – second analysis: support and emotions



“And I also know now that I didn’t have to then lie down on my back... in order to be examined..... And I said, “Can I have an epidural? It’s really painful.” And she said, “No, it’s too early.” And then I asked again – I kept asking – if my husband could come and she said no. And I remember very clearly saying, ‘I know that there’s a rule but no one should have to go through a night of pain on their own like this.’”

(Participant 010, age 44, 3<sup>rd</sup> baby)



# Healthcare professionals study – first analysis: Guy's and St. Thomas' maternity service reconfiguration

“I realise labour and birth is a pinch point and you need staff to deliver that care, but making sure you had good delivery of antenatal and postnatal services for specialist groups and high risk groups could have been a focus. In my opinion, that goes to show postnatal is the Cinderella service. Antenatal care got reconfigured in a way that lots of people wanted to reconfigure the service. People wanted to do virtual clinics and streamline things.”

(Senior Midwifery Professional)



# Key learning points from the research



- Women felt let down by guidance which reduced access to their maternity care.
- Virtual antenatal care was not universally welcomed.
- Women felt birth partners being present during antenatal, labour, and postnatal care should be considered essential to good quality care.
- Staff need training in how to conduct telephone consultations & build rapport.



# Building back better maternity care

- If virtual clinics are to become part of routine care, face-to-face methods of communication should be used.
- Women and HCPs require training to use the technology efficiently and safely.
- Health visitors are key to good quality postnatal care and should be kept.
- We have to continue to listen to women – especially during times of national crisis.
- Staff need to be heard, and well supported to stay safe and mentally well.

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# Thankyou for listening! +



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