# UK launches comprehensive investigation into NHS maternity failures amid calls for greater accountability



The UK government has launched a sweeping national investigation into NHS maternity and neonatal services, aiming to address systemic failures that have caused devastating harm to families across England. Announced by Health and Social Care Secretary Wes Streeting, this rapid inquiry responds to numerous historical and recent allegations of inadequate maternity care stretching back more than 15 years.

The investigation will scrutinise 14 NHS trusts selected on multiple factors, including perinatal mortality rates from the MBRRACE-UK reports, Care Quality Commission (CQC) maternity patient survey results, and direct family feedback. The trusts include some with the most troubling histories, such as Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust, where an independent inquiry led by Donna Ockenden found catastrophic failings over two decades potentially contributing to more than 200 neonatal deaths. Similarly, East Kent Hospitals NHS Trust, examined previously by Bill Kirkup, was found to have had significant failures resulting in the deaths of 45 babies. Other trusts under investigation span across England, covering regions including Leeds, Oxford, Blackpool, Bradford, Gloucester, and Sussex.

The selection of these trusts follows mounting evidence that problems with maternity care are endemic, not isolated, with a recent CQC review finding that two-thirds of NHS maternity units across the country were rated either ‘inadequate’ or ‘requires improvement’ for safety. This highlights ongoing systemic issues such as staffing shortages, delays in emergency procedures, and concerns over patient dignity and hygiene that plague many services.

Baroness Valerie Amos has been appointed to lead the independent national investigation, underscoring the government’s commitment to placing bereaved and harmed families at the centre of the process. Baroness Amos has emphasised the importance of including the voices of mothers, fathers, non-birthing partners, and particularly the experiences of Black and Asian women and other marginalised groups whose perspectives have often been overlooked. Initial interim recommendations from the review are expected by December 2025, with full national guidance to follow.

While some trusts have welcomed the review, families and campaign groups have called for more robust actions. For instance, families affected by Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust have repeatedly urged for a fully independent inquiry, preferably led by Donna Ockenden, reflecting concerns that rapid reviews may not suffice for the extent of the failures experienced. Campaigners linked to Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust expressed relief at its inclusion in the investigation but continue to push for deeper accountability.

Industry experts and advocates stress that this investigation represents the first phase of a broader, coordinated national effort. Following this initial scrutiny of the worst-performing services, the government plans to synthesise findings from multiple previous inquiries and current investigations into a unified strategy to overhaul maternity care standards across England. This approach comes amid mounting pressure to provide truth, accountability, and improved safety for families affected by maternity-related harms, thereby restoring trust in NHS maternity services.

According to official statements, alongside Baroness Amos’s investigation, a National Maternity and Neonatal Taskforce chaired by Wes Streeting will be established to drive forward these urgent reforms, aiming to end the cycle of tragic mistakes and systemic neglect.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-maternity-review-wes-streeting-england-b2826293.html), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-06-23/government-launches-national-investigation-into-nhs-maternity-services), [[6]](https://www.penningtonslaw.com/news-publications/latest-news/2025/national-maternity-inquiry-announced-following-widespread-failings-across-nhs-trusts)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-maternity-review-wes-streeting-england-b2826293.html), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/09/19/two-thirds-of-maternity-wards-unsafe-nhs-regulator-cqc/), [[7]](https://www.hardingevans.com/news/2025/07/07/national-nhs-maternity-investigation-what-families-need-to-know/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-maternity-review-wes-streeting-england-b2826293.html), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/baroness-amos-to-spearhead-maternity-and-neonatal-investigation)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-maternity-review-wes-streeting-england-b2826293.html), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/5faa1ddc-ccc3-40e9-b10c-73e45034858b), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/09/19/two-thirds-of-maternity-wards-unsafe-nhs-regulator-cqc/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-maternity-review-wes-streeting-england-b2826293.html), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/2025-06-23/government-launches-national-investigation-into-nhs-maternity-services)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-maternity-review-wes-streeting-england-b2826293.html), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/5faa1ddc-ccc3-40e9-b10c-73e45034858b), [[7]](https://www.hardingevans.com/news/2025/07/07/national-nhs-maternity-investigation-what-families-need-to-know/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-maternity-review-wes-streeting-england-b2826293.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/baroness-amos-to-spearhead-maternity-and-neonatal-investigation> - Baroness Valerie Amos has been appointed by Health and Social Care Secretary Wes Streeting to lead an independent investigation into NHS maternity and neonatal care. The review aims to urgently improve care and safety, with bereaved and harmed families central to the process. The investigation will examine up to ten services, including those in Leeds, Sussex, and Nottingham, and is expected to produce initial national recommendations by December 2025.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/5faa1ddc-ccc3-40e9-b10c-73e45034858b> - The UK government has launched a national investigation into NHS maternity care in England following multiple reviews highlighting serious issues, including unsafe practices and lack of compassionate care. The first phase will scrutinize the ten worst-performing maternity and neonatal units, including those in Leeds, Gloucester, Mid and South Essex, and Sussex. The second phase will synthesize findings from past investigations to create a unified national strategy for improvement.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/09/19/two-thirds-of-maternity-wards-unsafe-nhs-regulator-cqc/> - A review by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) found that two-thirds of maternity units in the NHS were rated as 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' for safety. The CQC's national review of maternity services for 2022 to 2024 highlighted that the failings uncovered in previous high-profile investigations were not isolated, with common issues impacting quality and safety across the country.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-06-23/government-launches-national-investigation-into-nhs-maternity-services> - The UK government has launched a national investigation into NHS maternity services following a series of maternity scandals. The investigation aims to drive urgent improvements to care and safety and provide truth to families suffering harm. It is expected to report back by the end of the year and will include a National Maternity and Neonatal Taskforce chaired by Health Secretary Wes Streeting.
6. <https://www.penningtonslaw.com/news-publications/latest-news/2025/national-maternity-inquiry-announced-following-widespread-failings-across-nhs-trusts> - The UK government has announced a national maternity inquiry following widespread failures across NHS trusts. The inquiry aims to address systemic issues in maternity care, including staffing shortages, delays in emergency procedures, and concerns about hygiene and patient dignity. The investigation is expected to report back by December 2025 and will include a National Maternity and Neonatal Taskforce chaired by Health Secretary Wes Streeting.
7. <https://www.hardingevans.com/news/2025/07/07/national-nhs-maternity-investigation-what-families-need-to-know/> - As of June 2025, seven NHS Trusts have been publicly named in the national maternity investigation: Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust, University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust, and Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. The final investigation may include up to ten Trusts, with the remaining three expected to involve hospitals previously involved in national reviews or under current CQC investigation.