




Government
of South Australia

SA Health

SA Health Statewide Midwifery Framework



The term woman/women is used throughout this Framework, in line with current research and evidence, and is intended to include those with diverse sexualities, intersex women and transgender women. The Framework seeks to acknowledge inclusivity and individual, family or community preference and identity.

The Nursing and Midwifery Office, SA Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country on which we live, learn and work.

We recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities, and pay our respect to Elders past and present.

Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Vision.....	4
Aim	4
Background.....	5
Methodology	7
Case Study: Yorke and Northern Midwifery Group	10
Strategies, Enablers and Pillars	11
1. Professionalism.....	12
2. Workforce	14
3. Care.....	16
4. Innovation.....	19
Next Steps.....	21

Foreword

The SA Health Statewide Midwifery Framework describes our vision for safe, accessible, and contemporary midwifery care for women and families.

South Australia has a highly skilled, compassionate and innovative midwifery workforce, who strive to ensure women are at the centre of all decision making and that care is connected and coordinated.

The current workforce has a significant role in positively influencing and optimising the future of midwifery care in South Australia. Central to this is acknowledging and investing in midwives as system leaders in the delivery of woman and family-centred care.

‘Midwife’ means ‘with woman’. The relationship between a woman and their midwife is at the centre of midwifery care. It is said that midwifery is an art that uses the heart, the hands, and the mind. The art of midwifery involves achieving a balance between using clinical and scientific evidence to provide care that is professional, intuitive and empathetic.

By truly acknowledging and respecting the art of midwifery across the system, we can further develop an engaged, innovative and collaborative midwifery workforce and services that provide South Australian women and families the right care, at the right time, in the right environment.

A SA Health first, the Statewide Midwifery Framework identifies key strategies and enablers that will support SA Health to achieve this goal.

This Framework promotes the investment in best practice, future-oriented and inclusive models of care and midwifery services. This will be enabled by the ongoing investment in supporting and developing an engaged, stable and skilled midwifery workforce that acknowledges and values the differing employment attitudes, perspectives and experiences of each generation of midwives within the workforce.

The co-design of the Framework truly reflects partnerships in action, and I thank those who contributed their expertise and knowledge to this project. This collaborative approach will also be central to the Framework’s successful implementation.

I hope this Framework will be a resource to enable and embed models of care that South Australian midwives want to see, so that all women and families benefit.

Adj Assoc Prof Jennifer Hurley
Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer



The midwifery profession and midwives are recognised as experts in the provision of safe, equitable, innovative, sustainable and inclusive woman and family-centred care, with an understanding of this role embedded across the system and within communities.

To ensure the South Australian midwifery workforce is sustainable, skilled, adaptive and future focused, so that women and families have access to inclusive, safe, contemporary woman-centred midwifery services no matter where they live.

Vision

Aim

Background

SA Health is committed to supporting and growing midwifery leadership, workforce, education, research, quality improvement and models of care that embrace best practice, so that midwives are autonomous and collaborative in practice.

The SA Health Statewide Midwifery Framework has been industry-informed and co-designed with midwives (including private practising), professional groups, external education providers and industrial bodies. It encompasses a broad range of strategies that aim to shape, influence and sustain the provision of safe and contemporary midwifery care to women and families in South Australia.

The Framework is supported by SA Health's Nursing and Midwifery Strategic Directions 2023-2026 and Health and Wellbeing Plan for Women, Children and Young People 2021-2031 (to be released) and aligns to a range of state and national standards, policies and frameworks that support best-practice clinical planning and governance, service design, models of care, practice and performance that reflects the invaluable role of midwifery in women's health across the continuum of care.

The aim of the Framework is to provide a clear direction for strategic and clinical planning for midwifery care and the midwifery workforce now and into the future. This includes planning for and enabling midwives to work to their full scope of practice, inclusive of women's health, preconception care, pregnancy, birth, and postnatal care through to menopause.

The Framework is intended to support and complement Local Health Network (LHN) workforce, service provision and clinical planning as an overarching systems-thinking and planning tool to support and enable:

- > improved attraction, recruitment, and retention of midwives across South Australia;
- > sustainability of the midwifery workforce across the career spectrum;
- > safe and high performing midwifery workforce culture;

- > high standards of care to women, in reproductive health, pregnancy, birthing, and postnatally;
- > improved equity and access to culturally safe and informed midwifery services;
- > Commissioning of services that demonstrate improved outcomes and experience for midwives, women and families;
- > growth of contemporary, evidence-based birthing services in priority areas/areas of need;
- > LHN clinical planning and development of workplans;
- > review of current models and inform commissioning of viable, best practice midwifery models of care;
- > pathways to midwifery and midwifery education; and,
- > enhanced collaboration, networking, and professional and clinical support.

Holistic, effective midwifery care relies on effective partnerships, between women, midwives, obstetric medical officers, general practitioners, nurses and other providers of care. As such, the Framework reflects the importance and value of midwifery leadership, professional collaboration and choice for safe and effective woman-centred care.

Methodology

This work has been led by the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer and Nursing and Midwifery Office (NMO), in collaboration with the key stakeholders including the SA Health Nursing and Midwifery Leadership Council, the SA Health Midwifery Leadership Advisory Council, ANMF (SA Branch), ACM (SA Branch) and the higher education sector.

Three key stages were undertaken in developing the Framework:

1. Review of evidence

The NMO undertook a review of local, national and international evidence on midwifery workforce, maternity service delivery and best practice models of care such as continuity of care/carer models. Foundational pillars were determined to enable a cross-sector collaboration that the NMO sought in the co-development the Framework.

The pillars were representative of the SA Health Nursing and Midwifery Strategic Directions 2019-2022 and aligned with the evidence that women and families are at the centre of all decision-making,

with the knowledge that midwifery care should be connected and collaborative for the best outcomes for the consumer, but importantly also for the midwifery workforce. The five key pillars that are the foundation to the Framework are:

- > Leadership and Mentorship
- > Connecting Care through Collaboration
- > Workforce Models of Care
- > Education, Research, and Innovation
- > Consumer Experience

2. 2021 Midwifery Symposium

The 2021 Midwifery Symposium, facilitated by the NMO, provided a collaborative and interactive forum for midwives (including private practising), LHNs, professional groups, external education providers and industrial bodies to reflect on the current state of midwifery in South Australia, nationally and internationally.

Using the five key pillars as the basis for discussion, the Symposium highlighted core themes and

principles for the future of the midwifery profession and midwifery care in South Australia (represented in Figure 1 below) and enabled the development of the preliminary strategies and enablers that would support the development of a working draft of the Framework.



Figure 1

3. Framework development, consultation and publication

Led by the NMO's Midwifery Director, a collaborative working group of representatives from each regional and metropolitan LHN further developed the Framework's strategies, enablers and pillars to form the basis of a working draft

Consultation was undertaken with the SA Health Midwifery Leadership Advisory Council and broadly within all regional and metropolitan LHNs and industry partners. The consultation period provided an opportunity for review and reflection, and an important opportunity to consider the alignment of the strategies, enablers and pillars to SA Health's Nursing and Midwifery Strategic Directions 2023-2026, which are supported by four key priorities:

- > Professionalism
- > Workforce
- > Care
- > Innovation

The SA Health and Midwifery Strategic Directions 2023-2026 forms the basis of SA Health's system-wide priorities for both the nursing and midwifery professions for the 2023-26 period, and as such the Statewide Midwifery Framework is aligned to its priorities.



Case Study: Yorke and Northern Midwifery Group

The Yorke and Northern Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) represents an investment of working together to build an evidence-informed model of care where women in the regional LHN have a known midwife in partnership with their obstetric doctor.

The evidence is overwhelmingly positive in its support for midwifery models of care as they are as cost effective, safe and demonstrate best practice. For the first time in South Australia an investment in a review and an evaluation of the Yorke and Northern MGP was undertaken.

[The Evaluation of the Midwifery Caseload Model of Care Pilot in the Yorke and Northern Local Health Network](#), undertaken in partnership with the Rural Support Service, University of South Australia and Rosemary Bryant Research Centre, and the SA Health Economic Analytic Team (HEAT) review have demonstrated the MGP model enables:

- > Lower intervention rates and positive birth outcomes comparable or slightly better than national indicators.
- > The care in the model promoted normality and strengthening women's capabilities.

- > Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the care they received from their model of care midwife during their pregnancy, birth and postnatal follow up.
- > Importantly during the pandemic all care providers demonstrated great commitment and attentiveness to the challenges of service delivery by being able to adapt to the needs of the Yorke and Northern communities.
- > A statistically significant reduction in average length of stay (ALOS) of 0.7 days across caesarean sections and vaginal births
- > Increased ability to attract and retain graduate midwives.

This evaluation provides an understanding of what a sustainable midwifery workforce model is in a rural/regional context but importantly for future workforce planning for all maternity service providers. All midwives who responded to the Yorke and Northern model of care survey thought the role of the regional Midwifery Group Practice was sustainable and would be attractive to other midwives.

A significant key to the success of the model of care in Yorke and Northern Local Health Network was strong visionary leadership and well-developed overarching management and stakeholder engagement, and we can follow this lead using this Framework to inform and influence.

Strategies, Enablers and Pillars







The Framework has been categorised under the four headings Professionalism; Workforce; Care; and Innovation.








Each category has a series of strategies, their relevant enablers and has been aligned to the pillars. The pillars that each enabler correlates to are represented using the following icons:

Legend	
Leadership and Mentorship	
Connecting Care through Collaboration	
Workforce and Models of Care	
Education, Research, and Innovation	
Consumer Experience	

1. Professionalism









Driving change and influencing the design and delivery of health services by valuing knowledge, skill, experience, and diversity.

Strategies		Enablers		Pillars
1.1	Strengthen and promote the professional identity of midwives.	1.1.1	Advocate for strong, positive, and strategic midwifery leadership in South Australia.	
		1.1.2	Encourage and support midwifery leaders and managers to participate in SA Health leadership and management programs.	
		1.1.3	Encourage membership of professional organisations to support the increased visibility, networking, and influence of midwives.	
		1.1.4	Advocate for midwives to work to their full scope of professional practice e.g., Continuity of care, Midwifery Prescribing, perineal repair.	
		1.1.5	Promote and enable effective professional networks with midwives across SA Health for positive engagement, growth, and development of the midwifery workforce.	
		1.1.6	Promote effective governance of practice and professional midwifery standards.	

Strategies		Enablers		Pillars
1.2	Support opportunities for midwives to collaborate, influence and lead.	1.2.1	Promote opportunities for midwives to be involved in policy and procedure development to influence service design and delivery.	
		1.2.2	Promote the role of midwives in the development of university curriculum.	
		1.2.3	Develop a SA Health Midwifery Professional Network that creates a safe space for professional support, learning, guidance, and debriefing opportunities.	
		1.2.4	Encourage interprofessional education and partnerships across metropolitan and rural/ regional/remote maternity and neonatal services.	
		1.2.5	Explore innovative ways to ensure and enable midwives to engage in reflective clinical practice and mentorship opportunities.	
1.3	Recognise the Aboriginal Health workforce as cultural leaders, working in partnership with the midwifery workforce.	1.3.1	Support the midwifery workforce to partake in cultural learning and acknowledgment of birthing on country.	
		1.3.2	Support enabling pathways for Aboriginal Health Practitioners and Aboriginal Maternal Infant Care Practitioners in all maternity service settings to support cultural safety and care to woman and their families.	

2. Workforce







Developing an agile, skilled, connected and sustainable workforce, supported with recognition and opportunities across the career pathway.









Strategies		Enablers		Pillars
2.1	Foster strong collaborative partnerships and models of care that enable all midwives within SA Health to work at their full scope of professional practice.	2.1.1	Support the design of midwifery workforce models that enable midwives to work to their full scope of professional practice, and encourage, for example, application for NMBA Endorsement for scheduled medicines for midwives and prescribing credentialing in LHNs.	
		2.1.2	Explore opportunities for midwives to work across services, enhancing continuity and ensuring a broad range of skills can be developed, shared, and maintained.	
		2.1.3	Participate in the development of best practice continuity of care/carer models for service delivery.	
		2.1.4	Promote and invest in a clinical coaching model for midwives working within public birthing services.	
		2.1.5	Foster professional and interprofessional education and learning at each LHN that is promoted across networks.	
2.2	Value and support the wellbeing of the midwifery workforce.	2.2.1	Promote opportunities for flexible and innovative workflow, workplace and midwifery workforce organisation and design.	
		2.2.2	Promote the development of effective professional platforms that enables the sharing of learnings, celebrates success, and promote the voice of midwives.	
		2.2.3	Advocate and promote opportunities for rotational change of work environments within and across SA Health e.g., professional placements and voluntary midwifery exchanges	




Strategies		Enablers		Pillars
		2.2.4	Promote and explore opportunities to work in other midwifery models to reduce fatigue and enhance retention and professional satisfaction.	
		2.2.5	Develop a Mentoring 4 Midwives program that provides support to all midwives but targeted to early career midwives working in SA Health.	
2.3	Develop professional pathways for Aboriginal midwives.	2.3.1	Support the education, training, and ongoing employment of Aboriginal midwives.	
		2.3.2	Promote the creation of flexible work environments that are inclusive, culturally responsive, and culturally safe.	
		2.3.3	Promote and allocate Assistants in Midwifery (AiM) roles targeting opportunities for Aboriginal students.	
2.4	Invest in building the skills and capability of the workforce to better meet community needs.	2.4.1	Support midwives to be actively engaged in clinical discussions, reviews, audits, setting agendas and providing feedback to teams.	
		2.4.2	Recognise and value all team members' contributions, knowledge, skill, and experience.	
2.5	Strengthen and increase opportunities for midwifery students to gain workplace experience.	2.5.1	Review the capability and scope of the AiM role and promote employment to support and influence midwifery work readiness.	
		2.5.2	Explore opportunities for an accelerated graduate transition program for midwifery students who have been locally employed as AiMs in their final year.	
		2.5.3	Explore opportunities with the university sector to promote an increase in midwifery clinical placements, as well as increasing rural midwifery student placements.	

3. Care

Working in partnership to provide safe and effective woman-centred care, tailored to local contexts, and meeting diverse community needs.







Strategies		Enablers		Pillars
3.1	Use statewide services and referral pathways to connect and coordinate the right care, at the right time for women and their families.	3.1.1	Support participation in the development of statewide perinatal referral pathways that support safety, equity, and access for connection and coordination of care.	
		3.1.2	Promote timely and responsive access to urgent/emergency perinatal advice across the networks.	
		3.1.3	Promote shared decision making with consumers so that the decision to transfer is safe and appropriate.	
		3.1.4	Ensure consumers are aware and provided with the appropriate resources to support understanding and transparency of clinical decision making.	
		3.1.5	Provide adaptive service delivery models that reflect individual consumer choice and avoid unnecessary transfer, if safe to do so.	
		3.1.6	Support and partner in the co-design of educational resources that assist midwives providing care to women experiencing pregnancy/newborn loss, inclusive of early pregnancy assessment services.	





Strategies		Enablers		Pillars
3.2	Collaborate with all women and ensure care is woman-centred, connected appropriate and safe.	3.2.1	Provide flexible and individualised care planning and service delivery options that meet the needs of a woman and their family/community.	
		3.2.2	Promote a culturally safe environment that supports women of all backgrounds to communicate their individual care needs.	
		3.2.3	Support the co-design and development of resources to support midwives to identify and facilitate appropriate support for women identified as vulnerable, women with specific care needs and those of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	
		3.2.4	Support the development of resources that focus on gender identity, sensitivity and diversity in a midwifery care context.	
		3.2.5	Support the co-design of resources to support surrogacy in South Australia.	
		3.2.6	Ensure maternity services and models of care are co-designed with consumers and communities, including Aboriginal consumers.	
3.3	Promote and enable accessible and equitable woman-centred midwifery care models that provide safety, continuity and choice for women and families.	3.3.1	Promote and include the benefit of best practice continuity models that are inclusive of all women regardless of risk, and collaborative with all maternity care providers in LHN clinical service planning.	
		3.3.2	Advocate for a sustainable, skilled, and valued midwifery workforce to provide safe, high quality midwifery services.	

Strategies		Enablers		Pillars
3.4	Invest in technology and statewide resources to better meet the local maternity health needs of the community.	3.4.1	Support the use of accessible telehealth technology across SA Health that supports timely access to care (including specialist services) to reduce unnecessary travel for consumers.	
		3.4.2	Support the investment in services for clinical advice and support e.g., perinatal advice line, statewide fetal surveillance initiative	
		3.4.3	Partner with SA Health Pregnancy Outcome Unit to promote and ensure consistent, timely, accessible data collection and reporting to reduce duplication and inform best practice and improve outcomes in perinatal services.	

4. Innovation

Investing in and engaging with research and evidence informed practice that delivers better clinical outcomes for those in our care.

Strategies		Enablers		Pillars
4.1	Promote equitable access to information, education and training to all midwives working across SA Health.	4.1.1	Establish engagement in a shared network approach to midwifery education across SA Health.	
		4.1.2	Share educational opportunities across networks such as, but not limited to: Webinars; Virtual interactive training; Clinical case studies; Clinical scenarios; and, CTG review sessions; Journal Clubs. Experiential learning;	
		4.1.3	Identify individual and team learning needs and support midwifery staff in professional education.	
		4.1.4	Engage with the university sector for evaluation support collaborative research, opportunities for interested midwives.	
		4.1.5	Promote and support dedicated time for education.	
		4.1.6	Support access to technology that support statewide access to education and training, no matter where a midwife is located.	

Strategies		Enablers		Pillars
4.2	Ensure research and best practice is embedded in strategic decision-making.	4.2.1	Expand the implementation of best practice continuity of care/carer models through future commissioning bid planning so that pregnant women have a known midwife.	
		4.2.2	Review current models of care and ways of working to create a flexible and sustainable workforce and service provision, now and into the future.	
4.3	Maternity services are co-designed with the consumer and communities.	4.3.1	Promote inclusion of a diverse range of consumers, including Aboriginal consumers and families in consultations for midwifery service delivery change.	
		4.3.2	Promote opportunities for consumer feedback to ensure a woman and family-centred experience.	

Next Steps

The SA Health Statewide Midwifery Framework is available to all LHNs to inform and shape planning for midwifery care and the midwifery workforce.

Through the collaboratively created pillars, strategies, and enablers, the Framework sets the direction for the future of midwifery care and the midwifery workforce by establishing the next steps to translate the evidence into action.

The NMO has commenced some of this work, including through:

- > The development of the [Statewide Midwifery Network](#) to promote and enable midwives to connect, collaborate and communicate together across all local health networks; a key enabler identified in the Framework.
- > The commencement of a shared network approach for statewide midwifery education, targeted at early career midwives but made available to all midwives, with recordings published and available through the Statewide Midwifery Network.

- > The development of a midwifery mentoring program - Mentoring 4 Midwives – to enable interested, experienced midwives to guide, support and educate the current and future midwifery workforce.

The NMO will continue to work with the LHNs and other partners to progress these initiatives and to develop an integrated action plan for the Framework. This will ensure it remains a strategic driver to continue to harness collective partnerships for the progress of midwifery and midwifery care in South Australia.

The effectiveness of the Framework will be evaluated through existing governance structures (such as the SA Health Midwifery Leadership Advisory Council), to drive actions and be informed by individual LHN implementation of the strategies and enablers. Continual review of the Framework and its implementation will be essential to enabling safe, innovative and effective models of care, service delivery, and an engaged midwifery workforce, that has a positive impact on South Australian women, families and communities.



For more information

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