

June 2018

## Health and Safety at Work Strategy

FEEDBACK FROM

New Zealand College of Midwives

PO Box 21 206

Christchurch 8143

Tel (03) 377 2732

---

The New Zealand College of Midwives is the professional organisation for midwifery. Members are employed and self-employed and collectively represent 90% of the practising midwives in this country. There are around 2,900 midwives who hold an Annual Practising Certificate (APC). These midwives provide maternity care to, on average, 60,000 women and babies each year. New Zealand has a unique and efficient maternity service model which centres care around the needs of the woman and her baby.

Midwives undertake a four year equivalent undergraduate degree to become registered. The undergraduate curriculum meets all international regulatory and education standards. Midwives are authorised prescribers in relation to their Scope of Practice as determined by the Midwifery Council.

Midwives provide an accessible and primary health care service for women in the community within a continuity of carer model as Lead Maternity Carers. Midwives can also choose to work within secondary and tertiary maternity facilities, providing essential care to women with complex maternity needs.

The College offers information, education and advice to women, midwives, district health boards, health and social service agencies and the Ministry of Health regarding midwifery and maternity issues. Midwives interface with a multitude of other health professionals and agencies to support women to achieve the optimum outcome for their pregnancies, health and wellbeing.

---

June 2018

MBIE – Health and Safety Policy  
PO Box 1473  
Wellington 6140

## **Health and Safety at Work Strategy**

The New Zealand College of Midwives (the College) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Health and Safety at Work Strategy and congratulates the government on their work to improve health and safety outcomes for all workers in New Zealand.

The College has provided a brief feedback summary below.

- 1.0 Work environment and workloads are increasingly being recognised as key factors in the recruitment and retention of health workers in New Zealand and internationally.
- 2.0 Many health workforces in New Zealand (including midwifery) are under stress due to short staffing levels and under resourcing. This situation is leading to burn out, further worker shortages and recruitment difficulties, which impact on the quality of care.
- 3.0 In regards to health and safety concerns in a maternity service context, the College recognises that the longstanding lack of a supportive infrastructure and the chronic low prioritising of midwifery and maternity services within health boards are the main causal factors of the increasingly challenging health and safety environment for midwives practicing under these conditions. Lack of effective support and funding for midwives over many decades has resulted in longer working hours, no access to back up or help when needed, excessive work demands, fatigue and burnout to a level that is increasingly affecting midwives health and safety.
- 4.0 There is inconsistent 'intelligence' about the wellbeing of the health workforce, other than crude measures of retention / FTE numbers.

5.0 The College considers that better data or intelligence on the health of the health workforce is needed. This can be used to inform the terms and conditions of contracts, policies and practices which employers can put in place to support their health workforces

6.0 The College considers there is District Heath Board accountability in terms of how workforce wellbeing, is reported, measured and contextualised. The health and safety of the entire workforce requires DHBs to take a wider responsibility and have a cohesive strategy to support all health professionals and health workers providing care across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. The CDHB is one example of a DHB who has recognised the importance of this and has an active approach to supporting the wellbeing of their full workforce.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Carol Bartle

Policy Analyst

New Zealand College of Midwives