



Midwifery-Led Abortion Care Consultation

Purpose

The Midwifery Council would value your feedback on its proposal to regulate Midwifery-Led Abortion Care as an additional scope of practice for midwives.

The objective of this consultation is to gather views from the sector to inform the Council's decision on the proposed additional scope of practice. Your feedback will inform the Council's final decision.

You can access detailed information about this consultation as well as other relevant documents at www.midwiferycouncil.health.nz:

- [Midwifery-Led Abortion Care Consultation – Background Paper](#)
- [Council official statement on Abortion Law Reform 2020](#)
- [Midwifery Abortion Core Education](#)
- [Health and Disability Service Standards](#)
- [Links to relevant local and international sites](#)
- [FAQs](#)

We invite you to respond to the questions in the consultation documentation in one of the following ways;

- Sending in a manually completed Consultation Document to:
 - The Registrar
Midwifery Council
PO Box 9644
Marion Square
Wellington 6141
- Using the survey link below:
 - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NHPWPHC>
- Making an oral submission by phoning:
 - +64 4 499 5040

Please note that the Council encourages midwives to provide individual feedback as summary submissions provided by organisations will be given no weighting.

The consultation closes on **Friday 19th November 2021 at 5pm**. We look forward to receiving your comments.

Instructions

In this paper, you will find a number of questions on which the Council is seeking your feedback.

Before you complete this paper, please ensure that you review the [Midwifery-Led Abortion Care Consultation – Background Paper](#) on our website. This paper provides you with some history on the Midwifery-Led Abortion Care consultation and the rationale for the Councils proposals.

Your Details

Your name: _____

OR

I would prefer to remain anonymous: YES/NO

I am completing this consultation document as an individual: YES/NO

If YES,

I am a (please highlight all that apply):

- Core midwife- primary
- Core midwife- secondary
- Core midwife -tertiary
- LMC midwife- urban
- LMC midwife - rural
- Midwife manager
- Midwifery educator pre-registration programme
- Midwifery educator post-graduate or professional development
- Midwifery Advisor/researcher/leader
- Consumer
- Other – please advise _____

If NO,

Please provide name of your organisation:

Midwifery-Led Abortion Care Consultation

The Midwifery Council is seeking feedback on its proposal to introduce midwifery-led abortion care as an additional scope of practice for midwives.

The objective of this consultation is to gather views from the sector to inform the Council's decision on the proposed additional scope of practice. Your feedback will inform the Council's final decision. Links to all documents discussed below can be accessed on our website.

Midwifery responsibilities under the Abortion Legislation Act 2020

The Abortion Legislation Bill received Royal Assent on March 23, 2020 and is now in force. Changes in the law were made to decriminalise abortion and align abortion services with other health services. Midwives are one of the groups of health practitioners that will be able to provide abortion care on their own responsibility – that is to provide midwifery-led abortion care.

To facilitate the transition for health practitioners and the health sector to provide safe abortion services that align with the Abortion Law Reform, the Ministry of Health has recently published the Ngā Paerewa Health and Disability Service Standard 8134:2021 and the New Zealand Aotearoa Abortion clinical guideline.

Implication of Abortion Law Reform for all midwives

Since the legislation came into effect, midwives have been required to provide timely navigation to abortion counselling and/or abortion services for people who have a mistimed or unplanned pregnancy and/or who are uncertain about how they wish to proceed.

If a midwife does not want to provide information about abortion, the Act requires the midwife to inform the pregnant person of this at the earliest opportunity and refer them to the closest and most accessible counsellor/service provider. Midwives must ensure that they provide informed choice and that all the information provided is without bias.

Abortion Law Reform - Updating Education for all midwives

To inform midwives about their roles and responsibilities with regards to the Abortion Law Reform free, online, abortion navigation and referral education has been developed by the Schools of Midwifery. This education takes approximately four hours to complete.

Midwifery-led abortion care

Prior to March 2020, midwives could not provide abortion care on their own responsibility because previous legislation did not permit this. Now that midwifery-led abortion care is legally permitted, it is the role of the Council to ensure that competence standards required are documented and the education programmes that it accredits will equip midwives to provide culturally and clinically safe abortion care.

Further education for midwives electing to provide Midwifery-Led Abortion Care

Education to support midwives in the provision of midwifery-led abortion care will be developed and would need to be completed before midwives commenced midwifery-led abortion care. It will take time to develop, accredit and implement that education. Areas of additional education may include updates on contraception, first trimester physiology, mental health, ultrasonography and counselling.

A staged approach would focus first on enabling midwifery-led early medical abortion, then midwifery-led mid-trimester and late medical abortion. Medical abortion care involves considerable knowledge, skills and behaviours that already lie in midwives' sphere of expertise. Surgical abortion would require significant new learning. The Council expects to focus on midwifery-led surgical abortion once pathways for medical midwifery-led abortion have been established.

Current Scope of Practice

The Council currently has one, general, Midwifery Scope of Practice. The Council recognises that midwifery practice includes care for women undergoing termination of pregnancy and that prescribing medicines to induce abortion sits within the Scope of Practice. One of the Competencies for Entry to the Register of Midwives covers demonstrating an understanding of the needs of the woman and her family in relation to abortion.

The difference is the extent of the scope of involvement.

There are issues in placing midwifery-led abortion care within the Scope of Practice because of the ability for midwives to conscientiously object to

providing those services. The Abortion Act places requirements on all health practitioners where abortion services fall within their scope of practice, regardless of the health practitioner's choice or opinion around abortion care. However, the Council recognises that some midwives may not wish to provide abortion services, information, or advisory services about whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy.

Incorporating midwifery-led abortion care into the General Scope of Practice would involve modifying the description of the Scope and the prescribed qualifications and/or experience required for it. That would require all midwives to complete relevant education to remain competent in that area.

Incorporating midwifery-led abortion care into the Scope would also require the Council to decide how to manage those midwives already registered who do not have the prescribed qualifications and/or experience to engage in midwifery-led abortion care.

That would be done by either:

- implementing a mandatory recertification programme for all currently registered midwives to upskill; or
- imposing a condition on all currently registered midwives, identifying them as someone whose scope of practice is limited, in that they are not authorised to provide abortion care.

Rather than place conditions on those who do not or cannot provide such services, the Council proposes to positively regulate midwifery-led abortion care services through an additional scope of practice, specifically centred around midwifery-led abortion care, called the “Midwifery – Mis-timed and Unplanned Pregnancy Care Scope of Practice”.

Midwifery Scope of Practice

All registered midwives are authorised to practise in the Midwifery Scope.

Midwifery - Mistimed and Unplanned Pregnancy Scope of Practice

Some midwives may choose to gain authorisation in this second scope. It would have standards of competence that midwives must meet and specified education requirements that midwives must complete.

The Council welcomes your feedback on the proposal to positively regulate midwifery-led abortion care services through an additional scope of practice, specifically centred around midwifery-led abortion care.

Funding

The funding of abortion care services is outside the scope of the Primary Maternity Notice. The Ministry of Health is working on addressing funding for midwifery-led abortion care. Funding lies outside the scope of the Council's consultation on the regulation of midwives regarding the provision of abortion services.

Some people can find the issue of abortion distressing. If you are triggered by this topic, the Council encourages you to ring 1737.

Need to talk? [1737](https://www.1737.org.uk/) is free to call or text from any landline or mobile phone, 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Trained mental health professionals are on hand to support people who call or text 1737.

Consultation

What you are being asked to do in this consultation is to answer the following questions about the Council's proposal to introduce midwifery-led abortion care through an additional scope of practice.

1. Do you agree that the Council should regulate midwifery-led abortion care through an additional scope of practice?

*Please note that the option to provide midwifery-led abortion care would be restricted to those midwives who register in the second scope.

Yes/No/Undecided

Please provide feedback on the additional scope of practice:

2. Do you agree that the proposed scope be named the *“Midwifery – Mis-timed and Unplanned Pregnancy Care Scope of Practice”*?

Yes/No/Undecided

Please provide feedback on the proposed name:

3. Would you seek authorisation in this additional scope of practice should it be made available?

Yes/No/Undecided

Please explain why: