



England

Womens Health... in the Workplace

12/03/2026

Dr Paula Cowan MBChB DFFP DRCOG MRCGP
NSA Gynaecology
NW Region Medical Director Primary Care
GP Partner Eastham Group Practice

The exam question!

Outlining government progress on reducing gynaecology waiting lists, tackling maternity care inequalities, supporting local women's health hubs, and improving NHS performance and the impact this is having on women's health

Encouraging ongoing dialogue and employee involvement to ensure health policies are responsive, inclusive, and genuinely effective



In 2026, women continue to face structural barriers and burnout in the workplace, despite growing recognition of their leadership and contributions, with only modest progress in inclusion and career advancement.

Introduction.....

RCSI	1995
Eastham Group Practice	2003-date
Wirral LMC: 2 Terms Vice Chair	2006-2015
<u>NHS Wirral CCG</u>	2012-2022
➤ Clinical Lead Urgent Care	2015-2016
➤ Medical Director	2016-2019
➤ Clinical Chair	2019-2022
NW Joint Clinical Lead NHS@home Programme	2021-2022
NW Region Medical Director Primary Care	2022 -date
NW Region Interim Medical Director Commissioning	2023-2024
National Primary Care Medical Directorate lead for Women's Programme	2024- date
National Primary Care Medical Directorate lead for Prevention Programme	2024-date
National Specialist Adviser Gynaecology	2025-date

WOMAN



2026

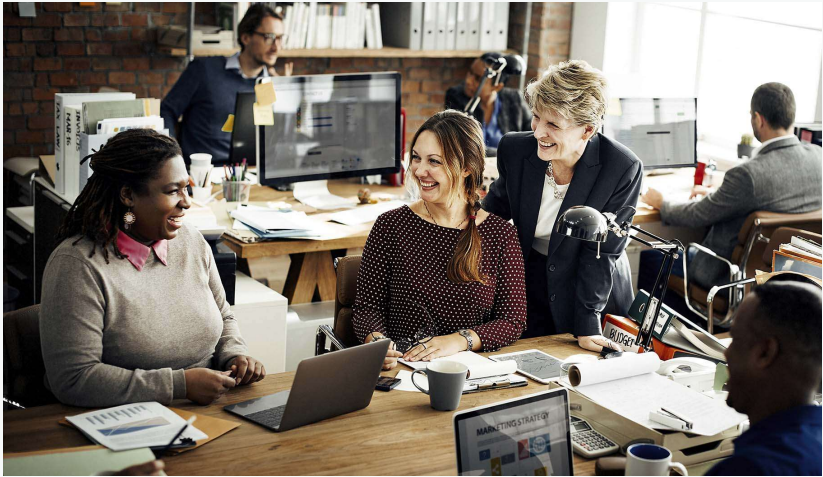


INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY

MARCH 8TH

#INSPIRE INCLUSION


What is the workplace?



Gynaecological Conditions and Long Term Health impacts....



HMB & Pelvic Pain



**8 CAUSES
OF HEAVY MENSTRUAL
BLEEDING**

1. Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)
2. Perimenopause
3. Hypothyroidism
4. Formation of Fibroids
5. Formation of Polyps
6. Adenomyosis
7. Liver Or Kidney Disease
8. Thyroid Disorders

The infographic features a woman in a brown sweater holding her stomach in pain, with two large black arrows pointing outwards from her abdomen. The background is black with white and blue text.

PCOS: Long term problems

- Increased risk of infertility
- Endometrial cancer
- Diabetes
- Lipid abnormalities
- Cardiovascular risks
- Obstructive sleep apnoea
- Emotional distress & depression

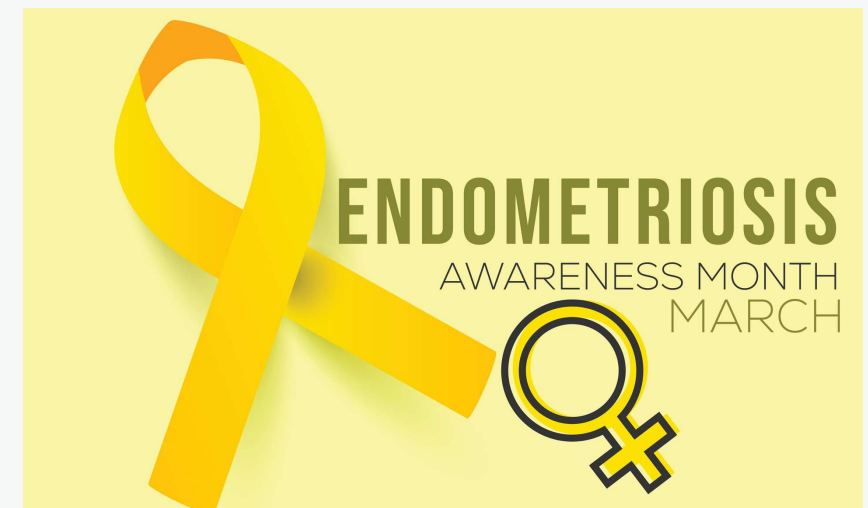
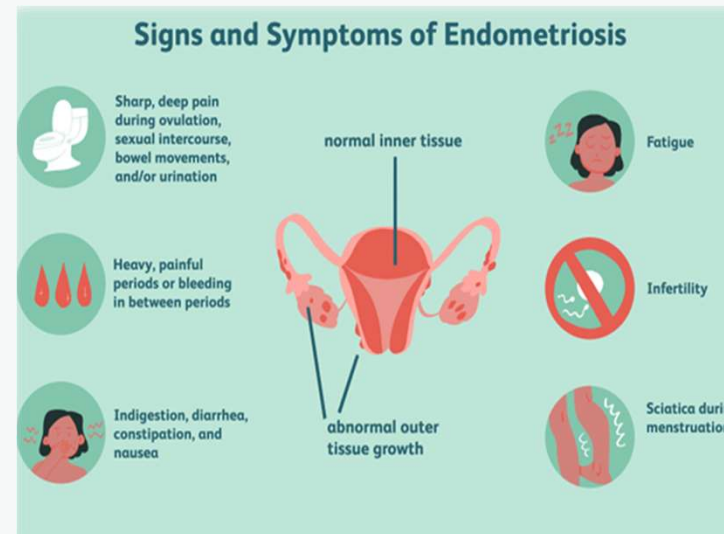


Endometriosis: Common Gynaecological Condition

One in ten women in the UK between the age of 15 to 45 years will suffer from endometriosis.

Around **5.3-12%** of patients have severe endometriosis involving the bowel –projected that around **550 new patients** with severe disease in the UK will need treatment each year.

ONS 2021 data, over 1k patients will undergo spontaneous pneumothorax PA, average of 4.5% of those being due to catamenial pneumothorax.



Ensure diagnosis is inclusive

Office for
National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Characteristics of women with an endometriosis diagnosis in England: 27 March 2011 to 31 December 2021

A population-level analysis of the characteristics of women receiving an endometriosis diagnosis in an NHS hospital in England between 2011 and 2021.

Until recently, very limited data who is/ isn't diagnosed

Office for National Statistics recently carried out the first population level study of its kind to explore characteristics of women with an endometriosis diagnosis in NHS hospitals in England (2011-2021)

Findings: Significant sociodemographic differences in likelihood of endometriosis diagnosis

Deprivation level: Women from the **most & least** deprived areas **least likely** to have an endometriosis diagnosis:

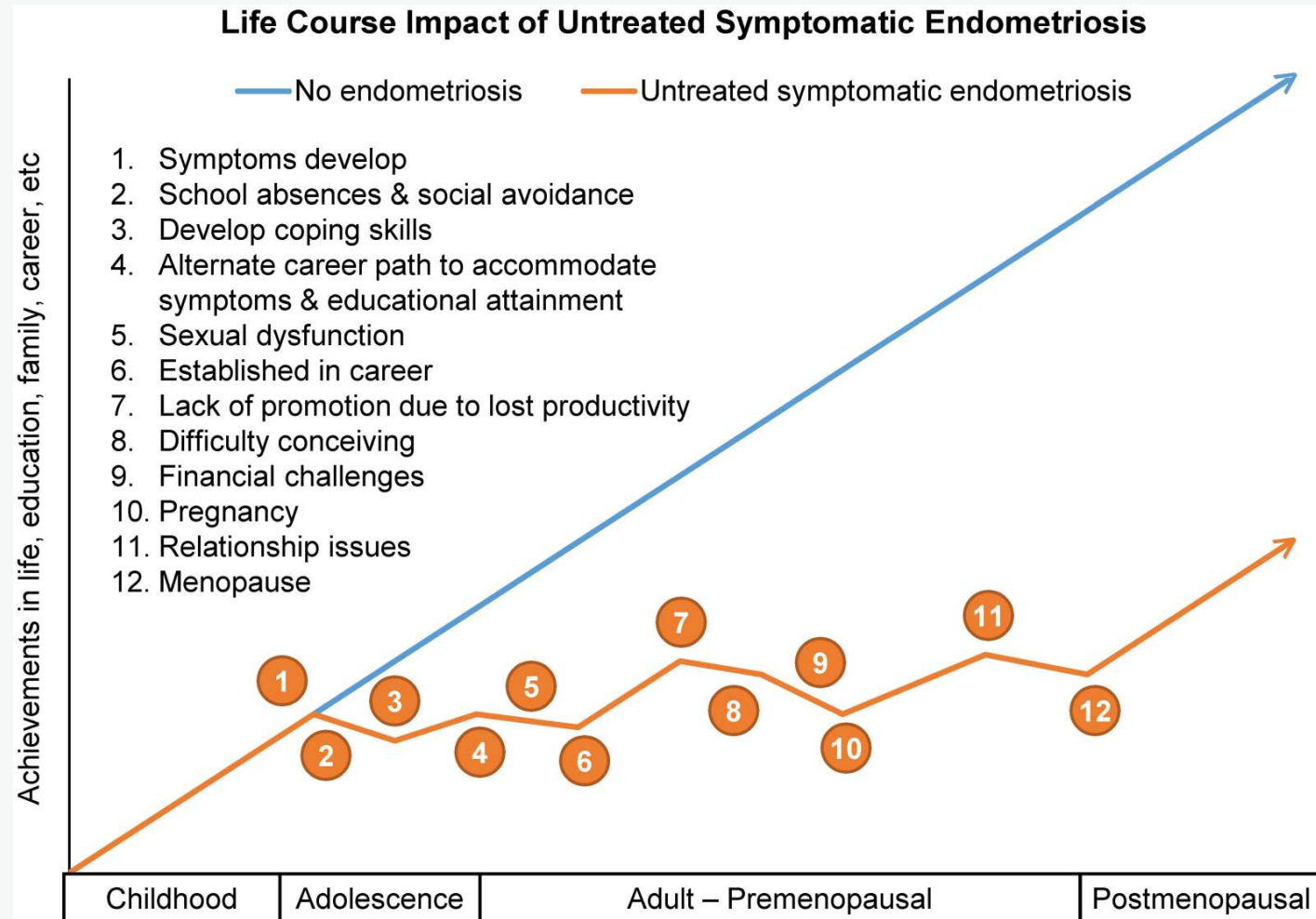
- **Most deprived** group - **lower access** to healthcare services
- **Least deprived** group - more use of **private healthcare**

Ethnicity:

- Likelihood of receiving an endometriosis diagnosis significantly lower for majority of ethnic groups compared to **“White British”**, except for **“Black Caribbean”**, and **“Mixed White and Black Caribbean”**
- **Lowest** likelihood of diagnosis in the **“Chinese”**, **“Arab”**, and **“Black African”** ethnic groups.

Limitations: Doesn't include those diagnosed privately, in other countries, or not diagnosed. More research needed.

Support through potential impacts across life course



Endometriosis can have debilitating **physical, psychological, social and economic** impacts.

Life-long, holistic support important

Might include talking therapies, social prescribing, patient resources, links with voluntary sector etc

[Endometriosis-friendly employer scheme](#)

ONS publication (January 2025) – further data including impact of endometriosis on **employment & jobs**

Figure: Theoretical effects of endometriosis on life-course trajectory, *International Journal of General Medicine*, Missmer S et al, 2021

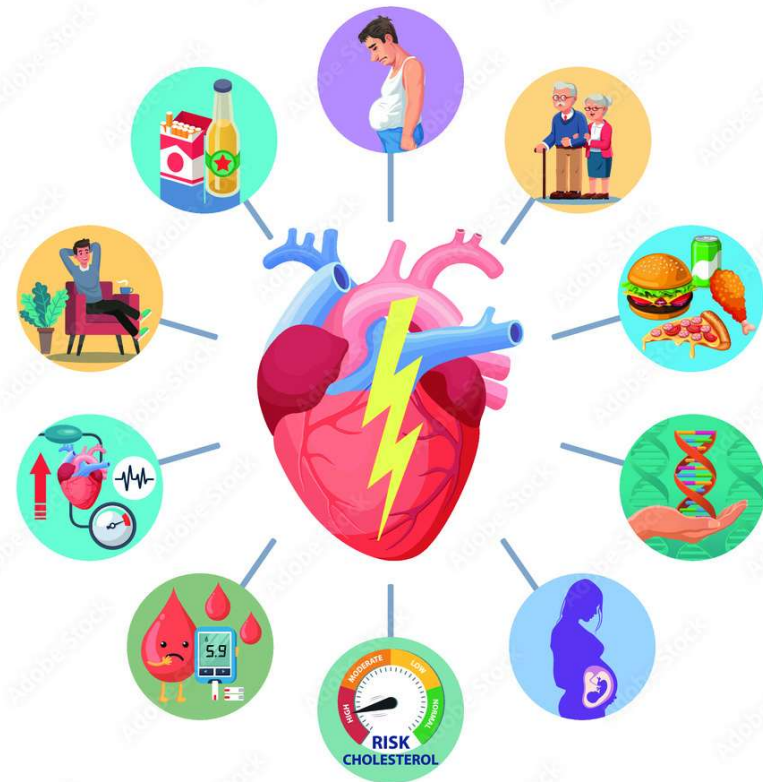
Coronary Heart Disease

- Coronary heart disease **kills twice as many women as breast cancer in the UK**. However, there is a widespread misperception that it's a man's disease
- This lack of awareness of their risk could mean women are less likely to recognise they are having a heart attack, leading them to delay seeking help.
- Women **typically arrive at hospital later** than men when having a heart attack, contributing to delays in treatment. A heart attack is a medical emergency - delays in receiving treatment are putting women's lives at risk
- A stroke can happen to anyone at any age, but it's often thought of as happening more in men. Men do have slightly more strokes, but stroke is one of the four leading causes of death in women in the UK. **Women tend to have strokes at a later age than men, and nearly half of all strokes (45%) in women happen past the age of 80.**

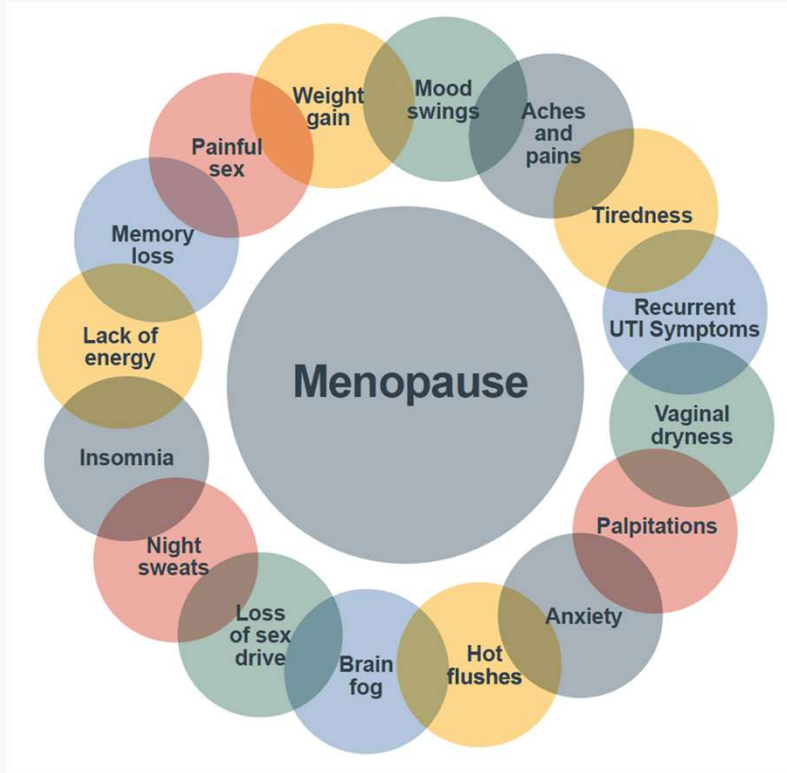


Risk factors

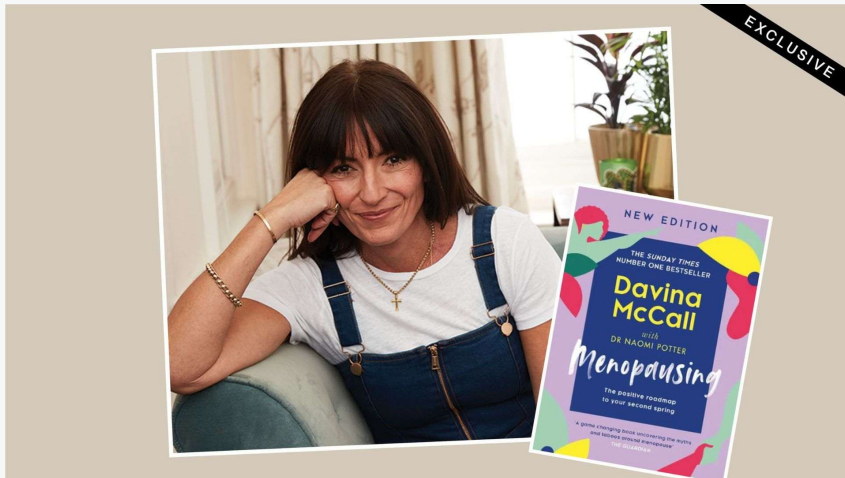
- The risk factors for heart attack are well established; **high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, a family history of coronary heart disease, smoking, obesity and diabetes.**
- **Women who have similar risk factors to men may have a greater chance of developing coronary heart disease.**
- Women's lack of awareness of this so-called 'excess risk', combined with a low uptake of health checks, means that women may be **dramatically underestimating** their personal risk of heart attack.
- Women who have established coronary heart disease **are less likely than men to reduce the chances of a second heart attack by managing their risk factors**



Adobe Stock | #418921487



Lets talk about ... Menopause



Menopause symptoms can impact all aspects of a woman's quality of life

1/2
said menopause
had a **negative**
impact on
their home life

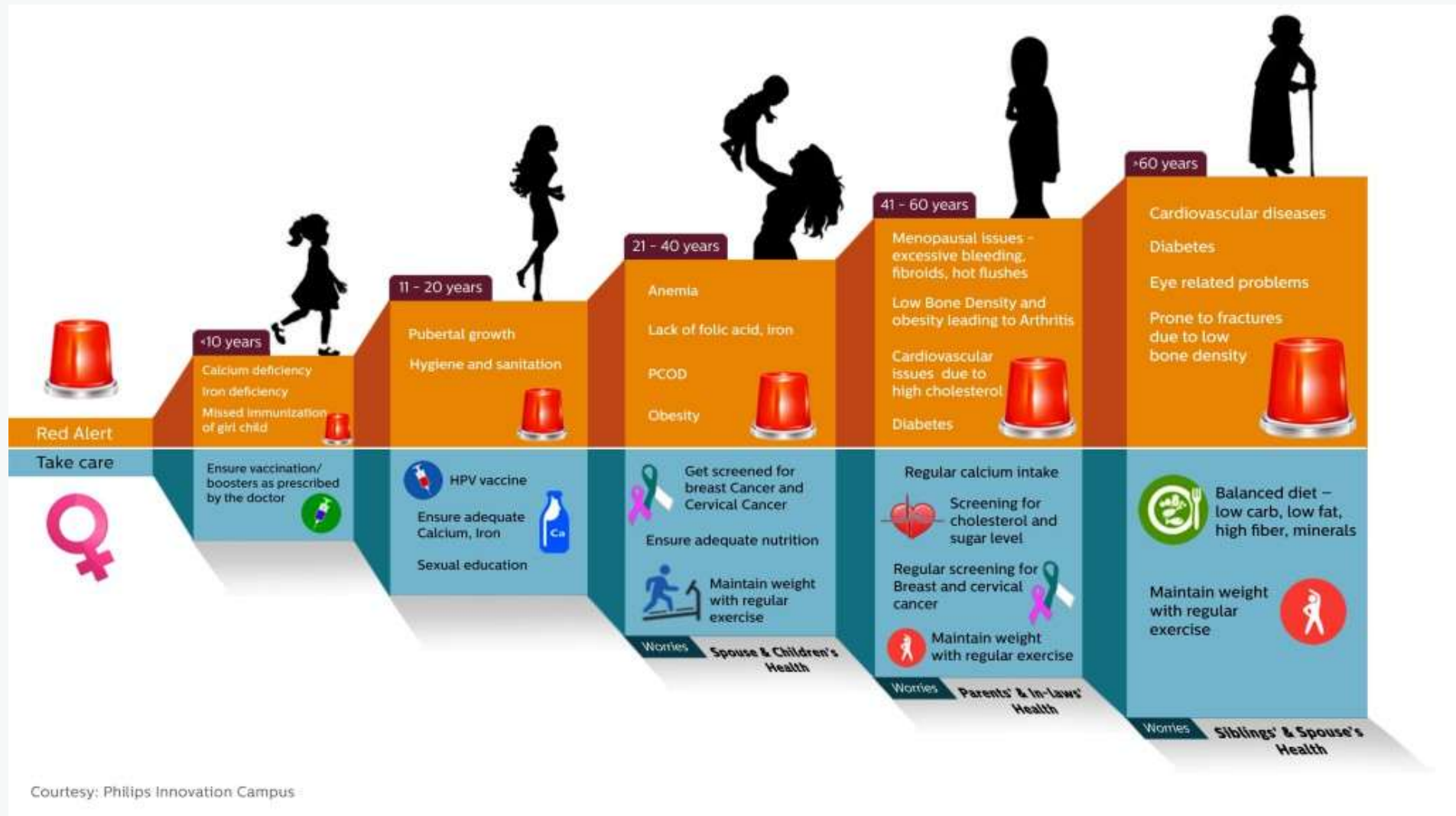
1/2
said menopause
had a **negative**
impact on
their sex life

4 in 10
said menopause
had a **negative**
impact on their
work life

3 in 10
said menopause
had a **negative**
impact on their
social life

Menopause – Understanding the impact on women and their partners, Heather Currie, Sara J Moger; (based on three online surveys with women 45+ with menopause symptoms (currently/in previous 10 years; 2015/n=1,000; 2016/ n=1,000; 2017/n=650 women and n=350 partners) 1

Menopause – Understanding the impact on women and their partners, Heather Currie, Sara J Moger; (based on three online surveys with women 45+ with menopause symptoms (currently/in previous 10 years; 2015/n=1,000; 2016/ n=1,000; 2017/n=650 women and n=350 partners) 2



80%
**Decisions in a
household
made by.....
Women**



Womens Health Programme

To improve the health and wellbeing of women and girls in England

To improve how the system listens to women

To tackle the gender health gap

£11 billion cost to economy for absenteeism due to severe period pain, endometriosis, fibroids & ovarian cysts symptoms*

60k women not employed due to menopause symptoms

£1.5 billion cost to economy*

84% women report being dismissed by medical professionals*

Gynaecology waiting list has the highest % increase of any speciality*

18 days of work missed due to severe period pain*

£3.7 billion cost to economy*

11 days of work missed due heavy periods*

£4.7 billion cost to economy*

Economic context

£11 billion cost to economy from absenteeism due to -

Severe period pain,

Endometriosis,

Fibroids & ovarian cysts symptoms*

11 days of work missed due heavy periods*

£4.7 billion cost to economy*

18 days of work missed due to severe period pain*

£3.7 billion cost to economy*

60k women not employed due to menopause symptoms

£1.5 billion cost to economy*

Quality context

**84% women
report being
dismissed by
medical
professionals**

**22,000 women
waiting over a year
for treatment***

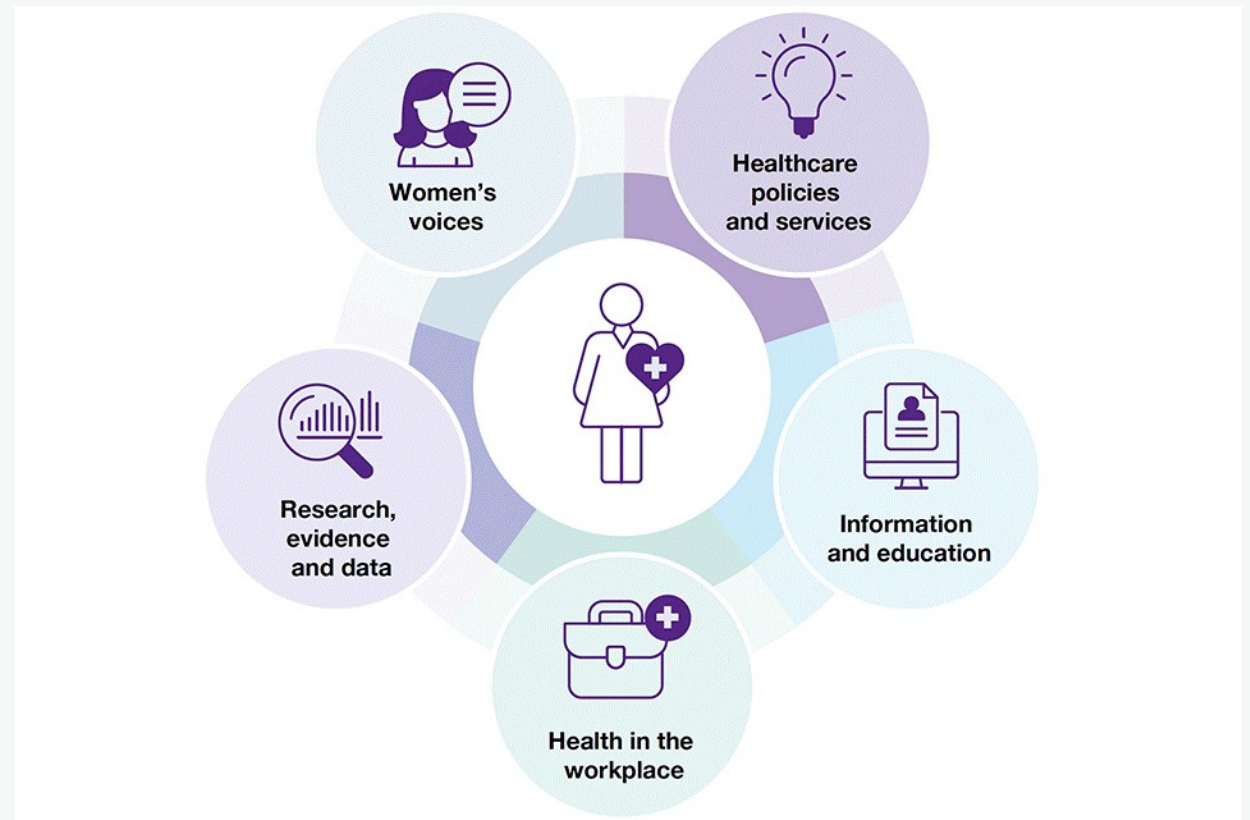
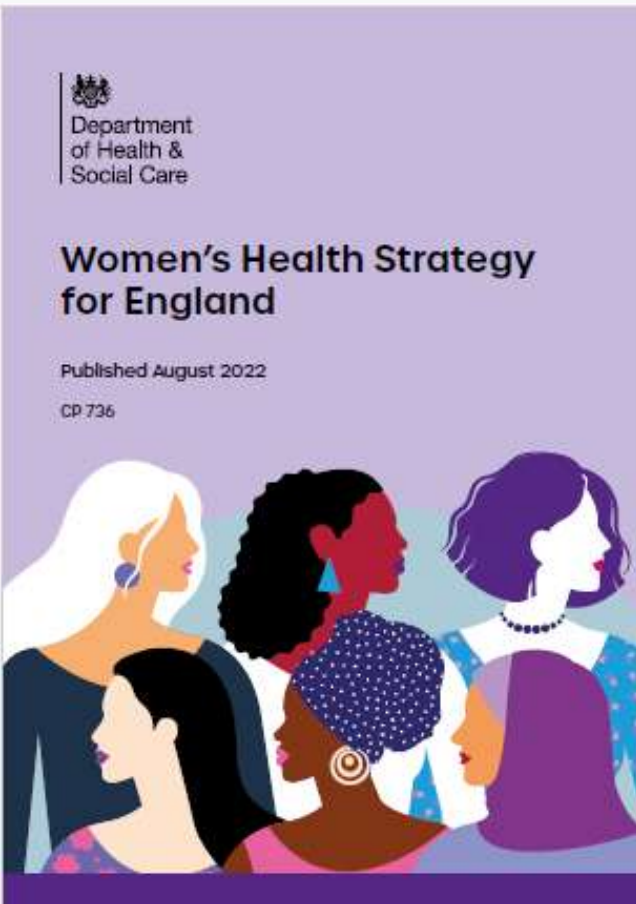
**Gynaecology waiting
list exceeds
750,000***

**Gynaecology waiting
list has the highest
% increase****

**60,000 women
unable to work
due to
menopause
symptoms****

*BBC.co.uk/news

**NHS Confederation. Women's health economics: investing in the 51 per cent. Oct 2024



“The balance of health and social care is still skewed too much towards the use of acute hospital beds. More diagnosis and treatment should take place in primary care.”

Derek Wanless 2002

July 2025: 10 Year Plan - 3 Shifts

- **from hospital to community** – providing better care close to or in people’s own homes, helping them to maintain their independence for as long as possible, only using hospitals when it is clinically necessary for their care
- **from treatment to prevention** – promoting health literacy, supporting early intervention and reducing health deterioration or avoidable exacerbations of ill health
- **from analogue to digital** – greater use of digital infrastructure and solutions to improve care





Customisable Advice & Guidance templates available for 14 common gynaecology conditions

May 29, 2025 | News, Publications



[Customisable Advice & Guidance templates available for 14 common gynaecology conditions - Getting It Right First Time - GIRFT](#)



NHS ONLINE
hospital care **when**
and **where** you need it

The graphic features a central browser window with the text 'NHS ONLINE' and 'hospital care when and where you need it'. It is surrounded by four circular icons: a doctor with a patient, a doctor with a smartphone labeled 'DOCTOR', a doctor with a patient, and a doctor with a patient and a lung diagram.



NHS APP

The NHS App that lets you book appointments, order repeat prescriptions and access a range of other healthcare services.

The graphic shows a smartphone displaying the NHS App interface with the NHS logo and options like 'Check symptoms', 'Log in or create account', and 'Terms and conditions'.

Care Closer to home: Community Service delivery



WHO WE ARE

We are a GP practice based at Ancoats Primary Care Centre, Old Mill Street, on the outskirts of the city centre. As well as providing primary healthcare to over 13,500+ registered general patients since 1998, we have also provided a primary healthcare service to homeless patients and currently have approximately 800 registered homeless patients.

WHAT WE OFFER

- Same day appointments
- Routine appointments
- Nurse appointments
- Long-term health reviews
- Routine Sexual Health checks
- Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) clinics
- Child vaccination clinics
- and much more



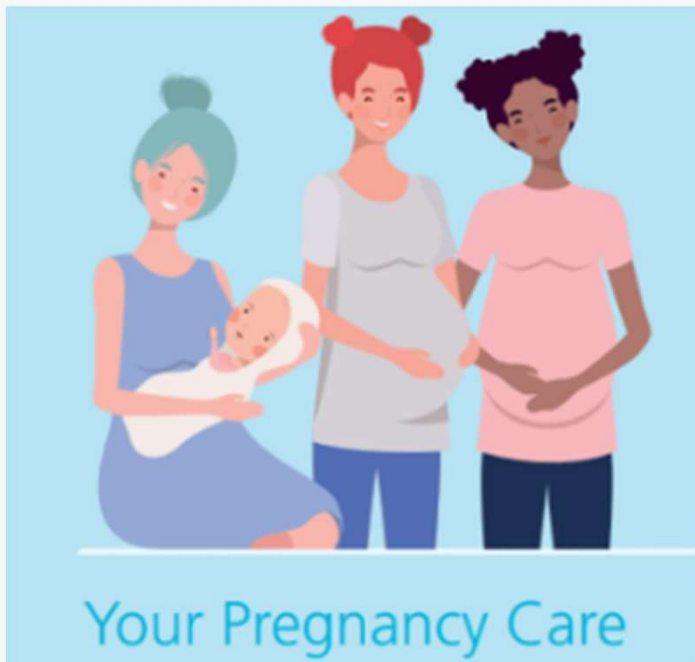
- Tower Hamlets
- Oxford (40% Reduction in referrals)
- Ancoats Surgery Manchester



HAVE YOUR SMEAR DONE RIGHT HERE!



Maternity Care



Maternity Care Bundle 2026 UK

The Maternal Care Bundle (MCB) is a comprehensive initiative by NHS England aimed at improving maternity care in the UK. Released in January 2026, the MCB sets best practice standards **across five key areas of clinical care to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity and address health inequalities.**

Address health literacy & language needs

Lower health literacy... poorer health outcomes

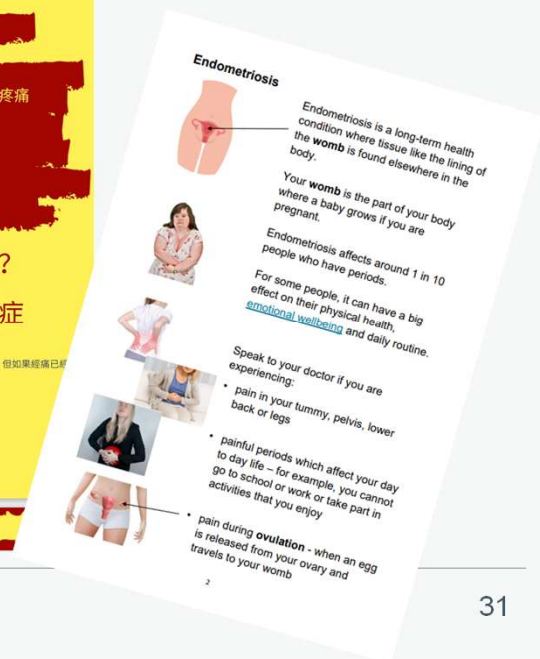
- One in 6 adults in England read and write at or below the level of a nine-year-old.
- Almost 1/2 UK adults find it hard to understand written health information
- English not main language ~9% (England Census 2021)

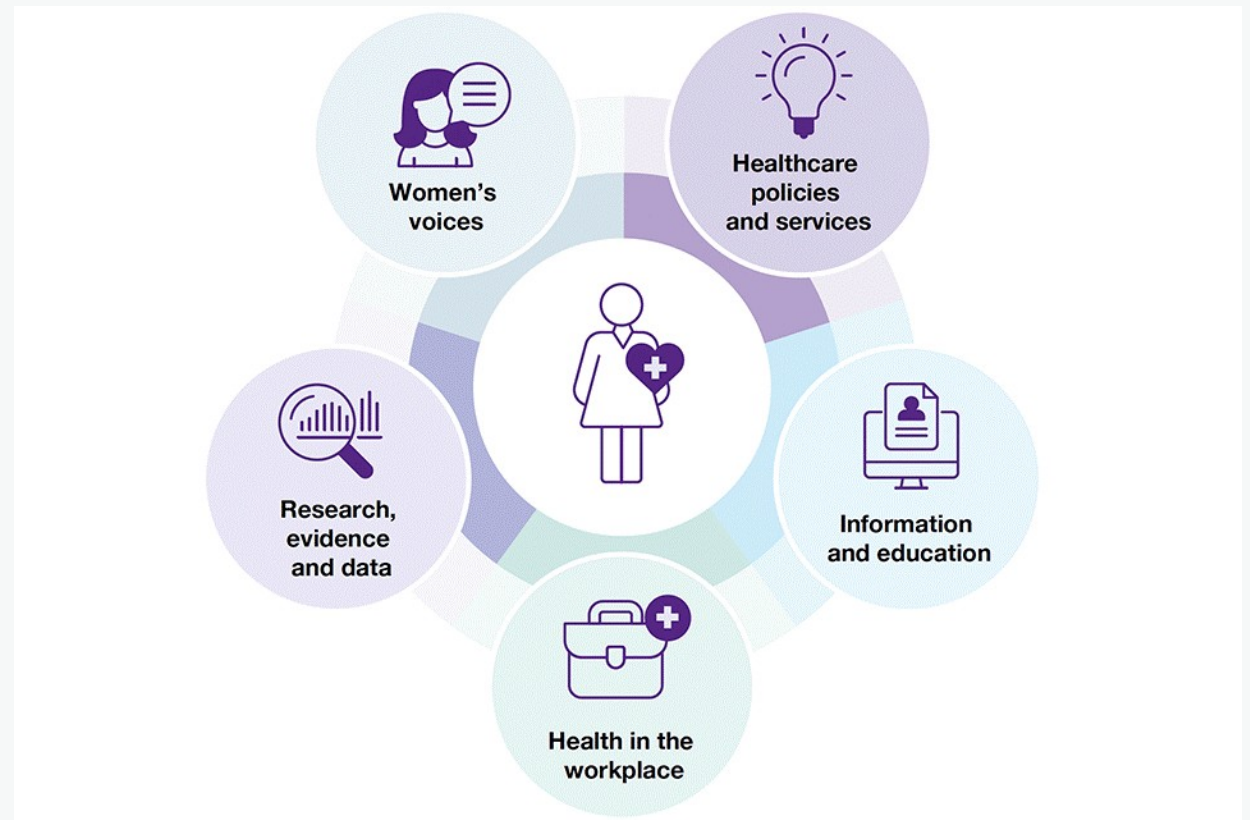
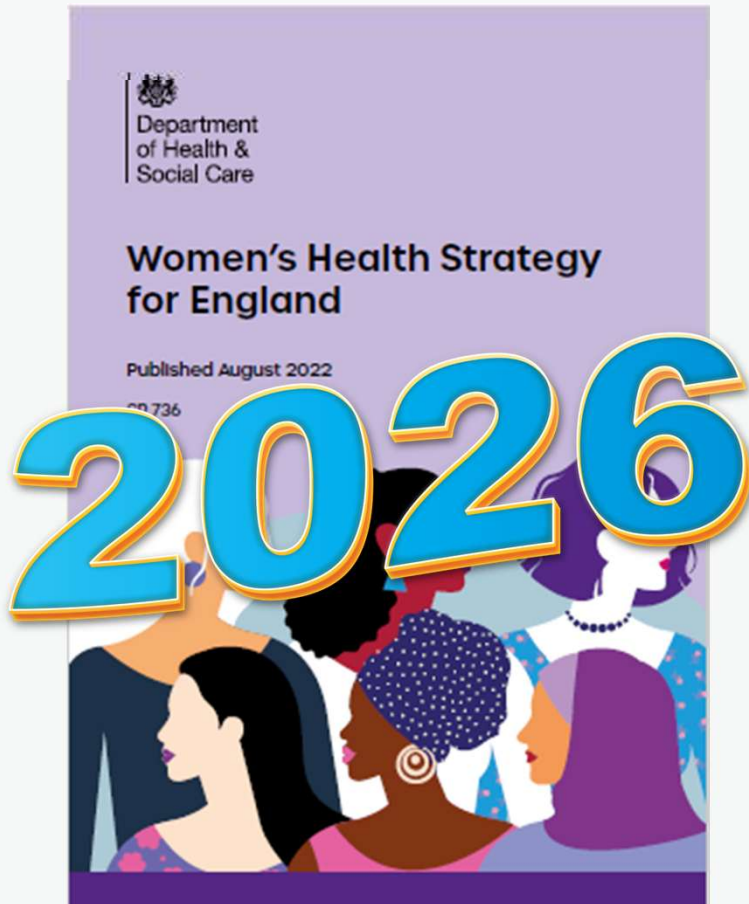
ONS study: Women were less likely to be diagnosed with endometriosis if

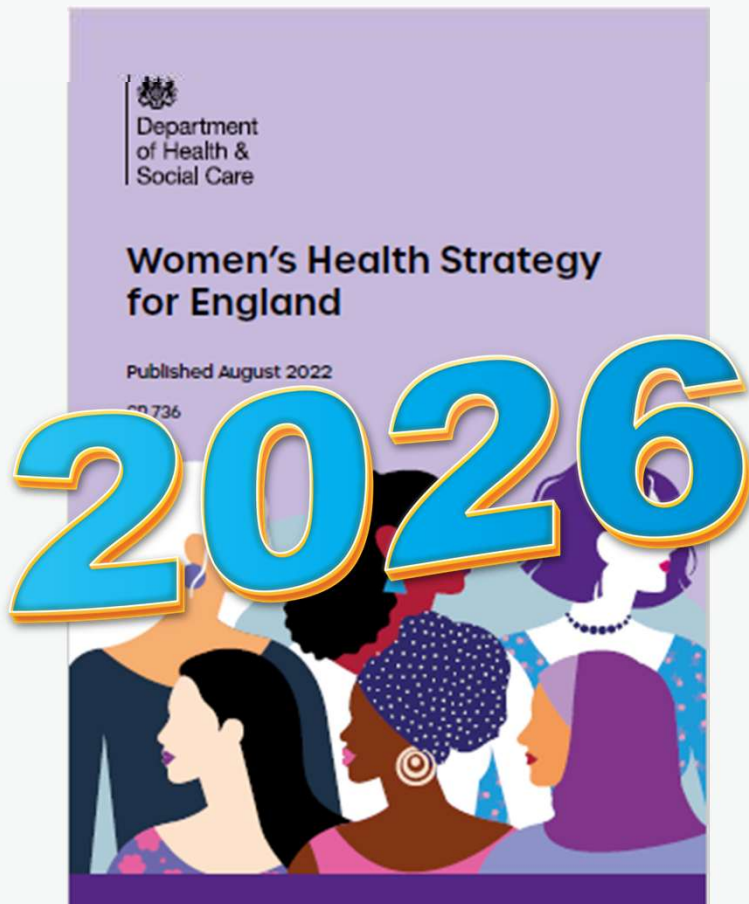
- Their main language was not English
- They had fewer/ foreign qualifications

Address needs:

- Resources in different languages
- Easy Read
- Help line
- Support Groups
- Health Literate Organisation
- [NHS Health Literacy Toolkit](#)





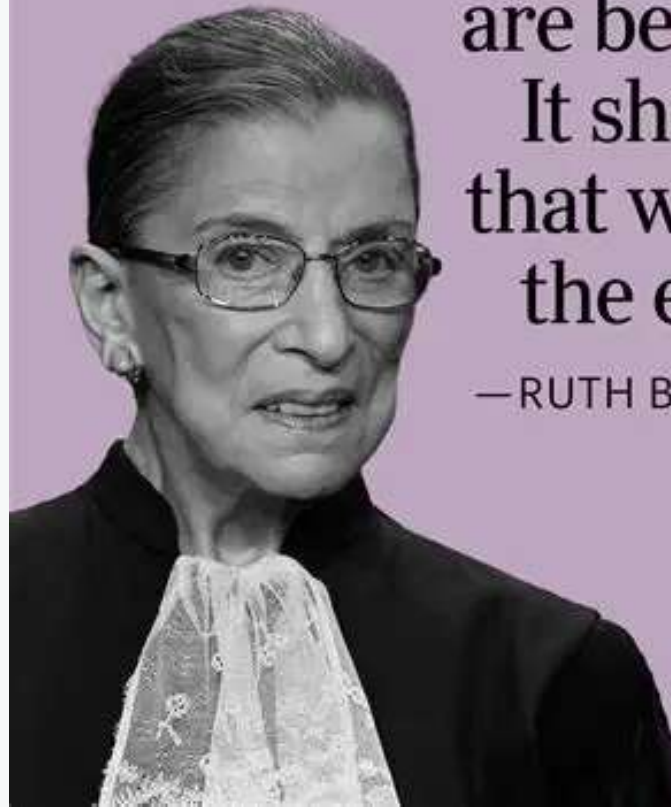


- Policy to support delivery
- Responsive to needs
- Tackling waiting times
- Supporting Neighbourhood delivery
- Tackling inequalities and inequity of service delivery
- Improving maternity care



“Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn’t be that women are the exception.”

—RUTH BADER GINSBURG



Any Questions?

Thank You



@nhsengland



company/nhsengland



england.nhs.uk

paulacowan@nhs.net