

Special Edition Of BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour To Discuss New Figures On Midwife Posts

Thursday 24 April, 2014

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SPECIAL EDITION OF BBC RADIO 4'S WOMAN'S HOUR TO DISCUSS NEW FIGURES ON MIDWIFE POSTS

Please credit Radio 4's Woman's Hour

Jenni Murray will present a special edition of Woman's Hour on Thursday, 24th April live from Liverpool Women's Hospital in which she will reveal new figures indicating that, of 99 NHS trusts in England who responded to a Freedom of Information request, nearly a quarter (24.2%) have not assessed their midwife workforce needs in past 4 years; 9% have not assessed their workforce needs in the past 10 years (since 2004); and two thirds (66.7%) have not recently assessed their workforce needs (i.e. in 2014 or 2013).

The number of births in England has increased a quarter in the last decade according to the National Audit Office report - Maternity services in England, November 2013.

Woman's Hour also found that, of the 99 NHS trusts in England that responded, 80% have vacancies for qualified midwives. 561 vacancies were identified by these 99 trusts. This snapshot of vacancies was taken on 1st January 2014.

The FOI request looked at vacancies over the past three years, taking a snapshot at 6-monthly intervals. Whilst it shows a persistent level of vacancies, the actual number of vacancies is at its lowest level for three years and has been declining during the period of the FOI.

These vacancies are funded posts that are currently unfilled. The wider problem of midwife shortages has been acknowledged by both the government and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM). The National Audit Office report - Maternity services in England, November 2013 - assessed there to be a need for 2,300 more midwife posts. The RCM puts the figure at 4,800 in their State of Maternity Services report 2013.

West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust had the highest vacancy rate in January 2014 (17.8%) and had a consistently high rate over the period specified in the FOI request. Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust had the lowest rate, recording no vacancies over the whole period.

Jenni will put the figures to Dan Poulter, the health minister with responsibility for maternity, and Cathy Warwick, Chief Executive of the Royal College of Midwives, live on the programme.

Woman's Hour will come live from Liverpool Women's Hospital on Thursday at 10am. Catch up via the Woman's Hour website.

Ends

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