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# Introducing and Establishing Women's Health Hubs **THE BENEFITS**

An overview of the  
Women's Health Hub model and the  
benefits of co-commissioning

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SITUATION

SOLUTION

SUCCESS



Overall, the current system remains one of episodic care, inadequate availability of women's health information and fragmented commissioning that is consistently failing women; especially those who find the barriers particularly hard to navigate. And, for too long, women of colour have been compromised more than others, creating a further inequality within an existing inequality.

However, in areas where the Women's Health Hubs model has been introduced and established, they are proving successful in addressing these inequalities, co-commissioning services and improving the patient journey and ultimately the health of the women they serve.

## The need for improvement in women's health provisions

Some gynaecological conditions, including endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome, and premature ovarian insufficiency, require a long-term condition management approach. They should receive the same parity of esteem as other long-term conditions rewarded for management in primary care. Many women suffer with menstrual problems, tolerating them for far too long because of the stigma associated with discussing 'period problems', and not knowing what is 'normal'. An estimated 50% of pregnancies are unplanned, with an increasing number of women requesting abortion. Many perimenopausal women suffer unnecessarily in the workplace and feel forced to give up their careers or reduce their working commitments and ambitions.

By developing co-commissioning arrangements between health and social care sectors, Women's Health Hubs can be funded to provide one-stop services for menstrual disorders, long-acting reversible contraception, fitting vaginal ring-pessaries, and management of menopause symptoms. These services should be similar to those provided for long-term conditions, such as diabetes, traditionally provided in secondary care but now with appropriate training and locally agreed pathways are provided in 'out-of-hospital' settings by multidisciplinary teams.

## Introducing a Women's Health Hub?

A women's health hub does not have to be a new building, it does not have to be a physical clinic in a specific geographical setting. A Women's Health Hub is a model, based on local need, using local skills. It is the provision of intermediate 'one-stop' care service for women that can, essentially, be what a patient makes of it. It could be a virtual advice centre, a physical space or a hybrid model that has evolved dependent on local need. The key component of a Women's Health Hub is that it is developed to meet the needs of the local population, it can help to provide life course, holistic care and empower women to make better decisions about their health and wellbeing.

## The aims and objectives of a Women's Health Hub are to:

- Improve patient pathways and streamline patient journey to offer patient centred care.
- Offer appropriate, accessible, quality patient care closer to home.
- Reduce multiple contact points.
- Reduce waiting times.
- Streamline referrals to reduce secondary care waiting lists and be a more efficient service.
- Provide new or additional services in primary care to address gaps in current provision.
- Improve access to long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) provision.
- Reduce unplanned pregnancies.
- Improve access to non-complex gynaecology, ring pessaries, removal of cervical polyps, PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome), HMB (heavy menstrual bleeding) and menopause.
- Upskill the workforce, including GPs, nurses, pharmacists and other members of the multi-disciplinary team.
- Reduce inequalities in access and care.
- Educate and empower women to self-manage and seek help as needed.



## Existing support

The wide-ranging ambitions of the Women's Health Strategy for England, published in July 2022, aims to improve women's healthcare and supports the need for developing a Women's Health Hub model. The strategy recommendations were informed by a survey of nearly 100,000 women.

These women said that they do not feel adequately supported in every aspect of their health and wellbeing, which included accessing high-quality information on women's health issues, being dismissed by healthcare professionals, and feeling unsupported in their workplace. The priority areas identified by women as problematic are ranked in order of importance by their responses to the survey:

- Menstrual health and gynaecological conditions.
- Fertility, pregnancy, pregnancy loss, and postnatal support.
- Menopause, mental health and wellbeing.
- Cancers.
- Health impacts of violence against women and girls.
- Healthy ageing and long-term conditions.

Women's health priorities are getting more media coverage, and this is enabling the conversation to continue. Women are more aware that they should be asking for better outcomes and understanding the importance of advocating for themselves because they deserve better care.

## Where to start

For commissioners, providers and decision makers looking to improve women's healthcare in their area but don't know where to start, there are numerous resources in the PCWHF Women's Health Hub Toolkit ([www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk](http://www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk)).

### Resources include:

- What is a Women's Health Hub? [www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/developing-a-womens-health-hub](http://www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/developing-a-womens-health-hub)
- Case studies from various perspectives whether you are commissioning or providing and want to make a difference
  - Oxfordshire Gynaecological Service [www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/setting-up-a-community-gynaecology-service-in-oxfordshire](http://www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/setting-up-a-community-gynaecology-service-in-oxfordshire)
  - Setting up a Women's Health Hub in Sheffield [www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/setting-up-primary-care-womens-hubs-in-sheffield-a-case-study](http://www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/setting-up-primary-care-womens-hubs-in-sheffield-a-case-study)
  - Developing a women's health pathway in Northern Ireland [www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/developing-the-northern-ireland-womens-health-pathway-a-case-study](http://www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/developing-the-northern-ireland-womens-health-pathway-a-case-study)

### Plus support with project planning, writing a business plan and financial planning, the importance of training and communication, including:

- Financial planning [www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/financial-planning](http://www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/financial-planning)
- Financial guidance when developing a Women's Health Hub [www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/financial-guidance-for-consideration-in-developing-a-womens-health-hub](http://www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/financial-guidance-for-consideration-in-developing-a-womens-health-hub)
- Writing a successful business case for a Women's Health Hub [www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/guide-to-writing-a-successful-business-case](http://www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/guide-to-writing-a-successful-business-case)
- Women's Health Hub project plan [www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/project-plan](http://www.whh.pcwhf.co.uk/resources/project-plan)

Drawing on the wealth of resources and experiences of others, establishing a Women's Health Hub will support the health and wellbeing of women in your area. The Women's Health Hub model is a fantastic way to ensure women's needs are met in the right place, at the right time, by the right people.