

Burnout fears for under-pressure midwives

The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) has called on NHS organisations to break the burnout cycle and support maternity staff better.

The call comes following a report from the Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) today on the mental health and well-being of midwives and nurses in the UK.

Suzanne Tyler, executive director for services to members at the RCM, said: “Regularly working beyond your contracted hours, unable to take breaks for food, or even a trip to the loo. That’s the daily experience of midwives in the NHS.

“Our Caring for You campaign highlighted the impact of shortages and pressures on midwives and maternity support workers. Yet, three years on, another report is waving a red flag about these serious problems.

“The NHS is not doing all it should to look after our maternity staff and this is having a terrible impact on their health and well-being.

“Many leave, worsening shortages and leading to even more pressure on those remaining. We have to break this burnout cycle by investing in maternity services and giving staff the support they need.”

The SOM report says current working conditions experienced by midwives pose a significant threat to their mental health, leading to a high risk of mental health problems and burnout.

It also found that working conditions threaten midwives’ health and affects their ability to deliver high quality care to patients.

She added: "Black, Asian and minority ethnic NHS staff often find themselves under even more pressure because of the overt and unconscious bias that can all too often be part of their working lives.

"The RCM is committed to tackling this and to providing better support for maternity staff from BAME backgrounds, which is why we launched our Race Matters campaign last month.

"The past four months has seen further stress and pressure heaped on staff who have just kept going. Now is the time for the NHS to really demonstrate that it is a caring, compassionate and fair employer."