



**FREE
FROM
HARM**

Created by White Ribbon Alliance UK

For Maternity Services Professionals

IMPACT REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Free From Harm (FFH) Training Programme, developed by White Ribbon Alliance UK, seeks to address obstetric violence and systemic inequities within maternity care.

Obstetric violence, a form of gender-based violence, manifests through disrespect, coercion, and mistreatment of birthing individuals by healthcare professionals. These harmful practices are often rooted in systemic issues, including patriarchal healthcare systems, racial discrimination, and hierarchical structures.

The FFH training was developed to combat these injustices by fostering respectful, trauma-informed, and human-rights-based maternity care. It provides healthcare professionals—particularly midwives—with the tools to identify, prevent, and challenge harmful practices during childbirth.

This impact report highlights the outcomes of the 2024 training programme, supported by feedback reports, surveys, and case studies. It underscores the transformative impact of the course in improving awareness, driving behavioural change, and enhancing professional practice.

Background and Rationale

The mistreatment during childbirth, including unnecessary interventions and verbal abuse, has long been ignored within the medical community, causing lasting physical, emotional, and psychological harm. Obstetric violence, rooted in systemic inequities, disproportionately affects marginalised groups such as women of colour, disabled individuals, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

Recognising the urgent need for change, White Ribbon Alliance UK launched the Free From Harm Training Programme in 2024. This programme addresses critical gaps in healthcare education by equipping professionals to:

- Recognise and prevent obstetric violence.
- Promote trauma-informed, equitable care.
- Advocate for systemic change to create safer maternity environments.

By incorporating an intersectional approach, Free From Harm empowers healthcare providers to deliver respectful care tailored to the diverse needs of all birthing individuals.

THE CRISIS IN MATERNITY CARE

The Scope of the Problem

Every year, one in four birthing individuals in the UK experiences trauma during childbirth. For 1 in 25, this trauma results in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)—a condition that not only impacts the individual but has far-reaching effects on families and communities. Suicide is now the leading cause of death for mothers in the first 12 months postpartum in the UK.

The disparities for marginalised groups are particularly alarming:

- **Black women are three times more likely to die** during the childbearing year compared to white women.
- **Asian women face double the risk**, highlighting systemic inequities in maternity care.

This is not just an individual tragedy—it represents a public health crisis with devastating societal consequences.

Impact on Healthcare Workers

The challenges extend beyond birthing individuals to the professionals who care for them:

- Burnout is at an all-time high, with **67% of midwives reporting work-related burnout** and over 60% considering leaving the profession within six months.
- **The NHS loses 29 out of every 30 midwives trained**, creating critical staffing shortages.
- The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, with **over 1,000 midwives leaving the profession** in the last three years.

These workforce pressures leave maternity care professionals overwhelmed and under-supported, compounding gaps in care and increasing the risks for both patients and providers.

A Call for Urgent Action

The Free From Harm Training Programme directly addresses these challenges by:

- Equipping healthcare professionals with the tools to recognise and prevent obstetric violence.
- Promoting trauma-informed, respectful care to rebuild trust in maternity services.
- Supporting professionals to sustain their capacity for care in high-pressure environments.

The time to act is now. Without intervention, these systemic challenges will continue to compromise the wellbeing of birthing individuals and healthcare professionals alike.

FREE FROM HARM TRAINING OBJECTIVES

By achieving these objectives, the Free From Harm training aims to create a ripple effect within the healthcare system, empowering professionals to advocate for and implement more respectful, patient-centered care practices. With the growing demand for such training, the White Ribbon Alliance UK hopes to expand the programme nationwide, ensuring that healthcare providers across the country are equipped to tackle these critical issues



Promoting Human Rights in Maternity Care

Embedding a human rights approach in clinical practice to ensure respectful treatment of birthing individuals.



Empowering Healthcare Workers

Equipping healthcare professionals with the tools to advocate for safer, more equitable care environments.



Recognising Obstetric Violence

Providing the knowledge and frameworks necessary for identifying and addressing obstetric violence in clinical settings.

KEY FINDINGS

The Free From Harm training is delivered as a 6-hour comprehensive course, supplemented by pre- and post-course activities. Participants - including midwives, obstetricians, and other perinatal health professionals - engage in interactive sessions designed to foster open dialogue and empathy. The training also incorporated storytelling as a tool to deepen understanding of obstetric violence's impacts. Data for this report was collected through participant feedback forms, post-training surveys, and in-depth interviews, providing both quantitative and qualitative insights into the programme's impact.

1

Participant Feedback

Feedback from the training sessions was overwhelmingly positive. Participants praised the relevance and practical application of the training, highlighting its transformative impact on their professional practices. 100% of participants reported that the training addressed the topic of obstetric violence, demonstrating the comprehensive nature of the course content.

2

Knowledge and Awareness

Prior to the training, many healthcare professionals were unaware of the full spectrum of behaviors and practices that constitute obstetric violence. The course provided them with clear frameworks and practical tools to identify these harmful practices, whether they were overt or subtle, such as dismissive language, failure to obtain proper consent, or unnecessary medical interventions.

“ *The breadth of examples of what is considered obstetric violence is far broader than most people would think.* ”

90% of participants found the content directly applicable to their professional practices.

3

Behaviour Change

In the follow-up surveys conducted post-training, participants reported increased confidence in recognizing and addressing obstetric violence in their workplaces. This high level of confidence is critical for fostering a culture of respectful maternity care in clinical settings.

95% of participants expressed that they felt more equipped to intervene when they witnessed or were involved in situations of obstetric violence.

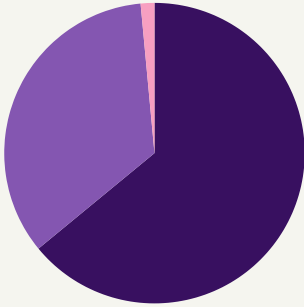
“

The realization that fixing my own house, increasing my self-awareness, will make me a better practitioner... it now seems doable.

”

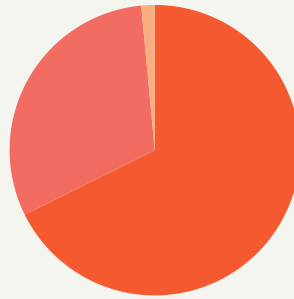
IMPACT IN NUMBERS

■ Fully Covered
 ■ Somewhat Covered
 ■ No



Coverage of the topic of professional burnout covered

■ Very Confident
 ■ Somewhat Confident
 ■ Not Confident



Confidence in Applying Knowledge Post-Training

Course Aspect	Extremely Satisfied	Very satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied
Overall Satisfaction	86%	14%	0%	0%
Trainer Effectiveness	100%	0%	0%	0%
Clarity of Course Purpose	92%	8%	0%	0%
Breakout Sessions & Group Activities	80%	20%	0%	0%

91%
of participants agreed that the course fully addressed obstetric violence.

98%
found the content highly relevant to their roles.

86%
reported being "extremely satisfied" with the overall event.

97%
of participants think other healthcare professionals will also benefit from the Free From Harm training.

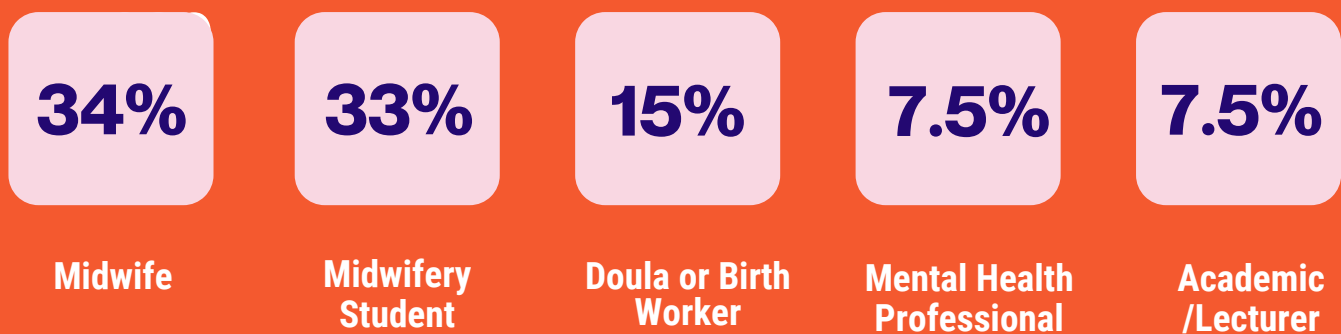
“ We need this to be mandatory for all NHS staff –starting in medical school and midwifery training! **”**



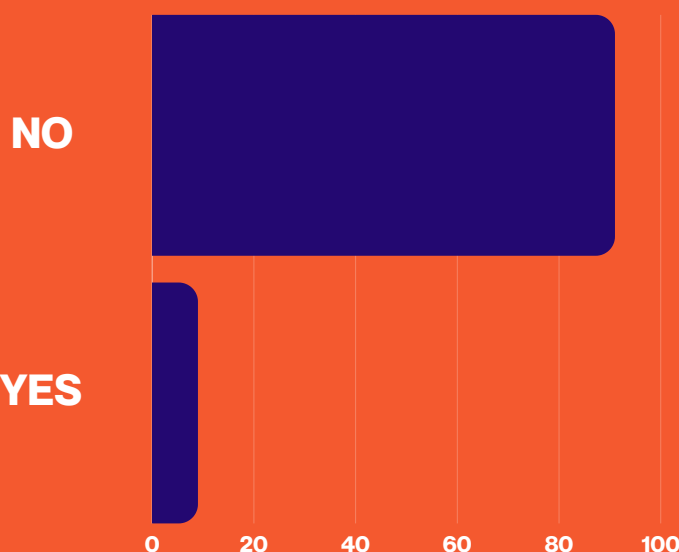
DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

The Free From Harm Training Programme prioritised engaging a diverse range of healthcare professionals who play pivotal roles in maternity care. Understanding the demographics of our participants helps illustrate the programme's impact and alignment with our mission to foster systemic change.

Profession of participants:



Previous training on obstetric violence



Non marginalised

72%



Marginalised

28%

% of participants from
marginalised and
nonmarginalised communities

Geographical Reach: Attendees came from both urban and rural healthcare settings, ensuring we addressed a broad spectrum of maternity care environments.

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINE OF MATERNITY CARE

WHY THIS TRAINING MATTERS

“
Surviving childbirth with a live baby is the bare minimum. We should be striving for more than this. I feel it's absolutely essential for all perinatal health professionals and birth workers.”

“
The training opened my eyes to how widespread obstetric violence is and how much work we have to do to address it.”

“
This is the first training I've attended that truly addresses the systemic challenges we face in maternity care and gives us tools to make a difference.”

EMPOWERING HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

“
The content was so relevant and grounded in my experience as a midwife. It gave me concrete tools to address violence and improve care.”

“
The PACE tool has already made a difference in how I approach difficult conversations with my colleagues and service users.”

“
I leave feeling hopeful, which is incredible given the challenges of the system right now. The tools I've learned will help me make real, actionable changes.”

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

IMPACT ON MATERNITY CARE

“ I now feel confident advocating for my patients in a way that ensures they feel heard and respected. ”

“ The scenarios were eye-opening and helped me reflect on how my practice can change to ensure every birthing person feels respected and safe. ”

“ This training should be mandatory for everyone in maternity care. It's life-changing for practitioners and the families we serve. ”

OVERALL QUALITY AND EXPERIENCE

“ The facilitators were so knowledgeable and created a safe space for difficult conversations. This was the best training I've attended in my career. ”

“ The combination of interactive elements, videos, and discussion was incredibly engaging and effective. ”

“ The balance of emotional impact and practical tools was perfect—I feel equipped to make a real difference in my practice. ”

LESSONS LEARNED

While the overall feedback was positive, several participants offered constructive suggestions for how the course could be improved.

"More on how to implement change in practice would be helpful. I need more practical steps to make a difference in my work environment."

More Focus on Implementation: Some participants felt that the course could benefit from more in-depth discussions on how to implement the changes discussed, particularly in challenging clinical environments.

Role Play and Practical Application: Some participants suggested incorporating more role-play exercises, which would allow them to practice confronting obstetric violence in real-time.

"It would be helpful to have more role-play activities to practice what we learned about challenging harmful behaviors."

"The breakout sessions were great, but I would have liked more time and the opportunity to meet different people in each session."

More Breakout Sessions: Participants appreciated the breakout sessions but suggested that longer or more varied breakout groups could enhance the learning experience by allowing them to engage with more colleagues.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING FOR WRA UK

- **Demand for Advanced Learning:** 75% of participants expressed interest in follow-up workshops or advanced learning opportunities, providing suggestions of topics to include in the future.
- **Class Size Impact:** Feedback showed that smaller class sizes (<10 participants) were rated less interactive and engaging, while 10-20 participant groups were optimal.
- **Scholarship Uptake:** Participant feedback stated the course fees were a blocker to enrolment initially due to financial constraints. The MSD for Mothers scholarship programme increased participant numbers significantly highlighting the importance of financial accessibility.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are immensely grateful to Amity Reed, creator of the Free From Harm resource, which served as the foundation for this training course. Amity's pioneering work in recognising and addressing Obstetric Violence provided the inspiration to develop this transformative programme. Her unwavering commitment to respectful maternity care, combined with her advocacy for systemic change, has empowered countless professionals to approach their work with compassion, awareness, and care.

Our heartfelt thanks to Leah Lewin, The Perinatal Specialist and co-creator of the Free From Harm training course, whose expertise as a perinatal specialist was invaluable in ensuring the course is both impactful and accessible. Leah's holistic approach to trauma-informed care and her dedication to supporting healthcare professionals in creating safer maternity spaces have been instrumental to the programme's success. Leah has developed a Birthworker version of the course, which we will launch in 2025.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Julie Boddy, Movement Director of White Ribbon Alliance UK, whose leadership ensured the smooth delivery of the Free From Harm programme and to Ruqia Barre, whose meticulous management of processes and communications brought this work to life.

This initiative would not have been possible without the generous support of MSD for Mothers, MSD's global initiative to create a world where no woman has to die giving life. Their funding of the Free From Harm Scholarship Programme enabled us to offer this course to a diverse cohort of professionals, removing financial barriers and expanding access to trauma-informed training. For more information on MSD for Mothers, please visit msdformothers.com.

We also thank the White Ribbon Alliance UK Board of Trustees for their ongoing support and strategic guidance.

Finally, our deepest gratitude goes to the participants of the Free From Harm training course. Their enthusiasm, dedication, and feedback have been invaluable, and their commitment to embedding these principles into practice will drive the transformation of maternity care for years to come.

SOURCES

- [Free From Harm: A resource for maternity care workers on respectful care for all](#)
- [OCKENDEN REPORT - FINAL \(ockendenmaternityreview.org.uk\)](https://ockendenmaternityreview.org.uk)
- [Reading the signals: maternity and neonatal services in East Kent, the report of the independent investigation](#)
- [MBRRACE-UK Maternal Report 2024](#)
- [Inquiry into racial injustice in maternity care - Birthrights](#)
- [APPG Birth Trauma Report](#)
- [Additional references and resources used by the Free From Harm programme](#)