

Women's Policy Group NI

Women's Policy Group NI Endorsement of Women's Resource and Development Agency Response to NICE Inducing Labour Update [GID-NG10008] Consultation on Draft Guideline

6th July 2021

Dear NICE,

The Women's Policy Group Northern Ireland are writing to you regarding the Women's Resource and Development Agency response to the Inducing Labour Update [GID-NG10008] Consultation on Draft Guideline.

Please consider this letter as an official endorsement from the Women's Policy Group NI of the Women's Resource and Development Agency response submitted on 6th July 2021.

The [Women's Policy Group Northern Ireland](#) (WPG) is a platform for women working in policy and advocacy roles in different organisations to share their work and speak with a collective voice on key issues. It is made up of women from trade unions, grassroots women's organisations, women's networks, feminist campaigning organisations, LGBTQ+ organisations, migrant groups, support service providers, NGOs, human rights and equality organisations and individuals. Over the years this important network has ensured there is good communication between politicians, policy makers and women's organisations on the ground. The WPG is endorsed as a group that represents all women of Northern Ireland on a policy level and we use our group expertise to lobby to influence the development and implementation of policies affecting women. This group has collective expertise on protected characteristics and focus on identifying the intersectional needs of all women.

The Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) submitted a response to the aforementioned NICE consultation on the draft guideline as a stakeholder organisation. As WRDA is the secretariat of the Women's Policy Group, and individual member organisations of the WPG also support this response, several of our WPG members wish to express our explicit endorsement of the WRDA response in an effort to ensure this guideline is not implemented.

In particular, the WPG are endorsing the WRDA response for the following reasons:

1. These proposals single out black and brown birth giving people, over 35s and people with higher BMIs for early induction at 39 weeks. The equality impact assessment for this guideline has not recognised the impact on these groups of women and birth givers of being singled out based on the fact that these groups have worse health outcomes in general. This is gravely concerning as no evidence is provided that induction may improve these outcomes at all.
2. Having a black or brown body does not mean you are less able to give birth. Suggesting so through these guidelines implies that being black or brown is itself a physical risk in pregnancy, rather than addressing the root causes of inequality in our health system which cause black and brown people to be vulnerable to harm.
3. We know that interventions in birth mean a person could be more likely to experience a traumatic birth; so, we can assume that under these proposals more black and brown people may experience traumatic births. We also know these communities are then less likely to receive support following a traumatic birth experience and that this leads to greater health inequalities later in life.
4. These guidelines present induction as a 'choice', however, we know that many women and birth givers already feel that they faced inadequate communication around the options available to them; especially when many black and brown people report never being offered a 'choice' at all, having their choices overridden, denied or their consent ignored. Many have their questions, fears and concerns dismissed or belittled.
5. These proposals downplay the fact that many individuals experience induction as being more painful, and that it removes options for giving birth at home or in a birth centre. For the individual this erodes choice; but this also puts greater pressure on an already stretched system.

We understand that NICE are constrained to look only at the Induction of Labour, but the needs of black and brown birthing people should be looked at holistically. Further, there are already grave issues around effective communication and for women and birth givers to feel that they are in a position to provide informed consent, which are unlikely to be fully addressed improved through this guideline.

Given these points above, as explained in further detail in the WRDA Stakeholder Organisation Response, we do not wish to see these guidelines be published. Instead, we are calling for a greater, in-depth look at the root causes for inequality black and brown women and birth giver's experience.

Signed on behalf of:

Women's Policy Group NI

Alliance for Choice

HERE NI

Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network

Belfast Multicultural Association

Women's Support Network

Belfast Feminist Network

Reclaim the Agenda

Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform