

Ministers across government urge women to shape women's health strategy

- Government ministers are touring the country to encourage women to have their say on the Women's Health Strategy ahead of 13 June deadline
- Completing the call for evidence takes just 10 minutes and it is easily accessible from a phone, tablet or laptop

To mark the International Day of Action for Women's Health, ministers across government are touring the country to urge women to make their voices heard and help shape the first ever government-led Women's Health Strategy.

The Women's Health Strategy is designed to increase the health and well-being outcomes of women in England, and ministers and the government are determined that women get to shape the policies that will drive up equality in our health system.

To ensure the strategy works for women, the government issued a [call for evidence](#), which closes on 13 June. There has already been a staggering response with over 80,000 women, organisations, clinicians and carers responding so far.

With just over 2 weeks until the call for evidence closes, the government is calling on women of all ages and backgrounds to share their experiences, insights and priorities.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The public have a right to expect a health and care system that truly works for everyone in society, regardless of background or gender.

There is unmistakable evidence, in the data and in people's health outcomes, that there is a gender gap in our health system and it is this gap that we want to eradicate with the first ever government-led Women's Health Strategy.

This strategy has to be one that reflects the views and experiences of women across the country, from Hartlepool to Cornwall, and the response so far has been overwhelming. Whether you work in the health and care profession or are somebody who uses it, we want to hear from you.

To further raise awareness, this week ministers across government are visiting women's health-related charities, projects and healthcare settings across the country to make sure women are making their voices heard, including:

- Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock at the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust, site of Women and Children's Hospital
- Minister for Women's Health Nadine Dorries at St Thomas' maternity unit with Jacqueline Dunkley Bent
- Minister of State for Health Ed Argar will visit the Royal Marsden Hospital
- Minister for Innovation Lord Bethell will visit UKHSA Collindale lab
- Minister for Care Helen Whately will visit Kent Medical school
- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Rough Sleeping Eddie Hughes will visit the Green Lane Hostel in Walsall, which provides support to vulnerable young people aged 16 to 25
- Minister of State for Digital and Culture Caroline Dinenage will undertake an endometriosis-focused visit on the south coast
- Prisons and Probations Minister Alex Chalk will visit a Gloucester rape and sexual abuse centre
- Environment Minister Rebecca Pow will visit a local hospital in Taunton
- Minister of State for Universities Michelle Donelan will host a roundtable with women in her constituency to discuss women's health
- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Baroness Barran will virtually visit Ovarian Cancer Action
- Chairman of the Party Amanda Milling will visit a women's gym in Pudsey

Minister for Women's Health, Nadine Dorries, said:

For generations, women's issues have often been marginalised, and seldom given the attention they deserve. At the same time, we have consistently been underrepresented in research and clinical trials.

It is high time we change that. We need to make sure ours is a healthcare system that is really meeting women's needs. I urge all women, from all walks of life, to tell us their experiences and thoughts in our call for evidence so we can put your voices at the heart of our Women's Health Strategy and make sure our future policy works for you.

It really is the final countdown – there are only 16 days left for you to make sure your voice is heard.

Other ministers, including the Prime Minister, Secretary of State for International Trade and Minister for Women and Equalities Liz Truss, Secretary of State for Justice Robert Buckland, Children's Minister Vicky Ford, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Baroness Barran and Paymaster General Penny Mordaunt are expected to support activity on social media.

Charities, Royal Colleges, patient groups and other stakeholders are also lending their support today. Mencap, the Eve Appeal, the Royal College of Midwives, Endometriosis UK and the British Heart Foundation will share content, including videos and case studies, urging their members and

supporters to respond to the call for evidence.

As well as health issues specific to women, the strategy will look at the different ways in which women experience health issues that affect both women and men. Women with health conditions such as diabetes, heart conditions and osteoarthritis are also being urged to share how their condition has affected them.

The call for evidence has been designed to be user friendly, quick to fill in and easily accessible from people's mobiles. People who live with and care for women, organisations with experience of providing services for women and those with an expertise in women's health are also encouraged to share their views.

Read the [Women's Health Strategy: Call for Evidence](#).

The 6 core-themes included in the call for evidence are:

- placing women's voices at the centre of their health and care – how the health and care system engages with and listens to women at the individual level as well as at the system level
- improving the quality and accessibility of information and education on women's health – women having access to high-quality information when they need to make a decision, increasing health literacy, as well as increasing awareness and understanding of women's health conditions among clinicians
- ensuring the health and care system understands and is responsive to women's health and care needs across the life course – supporting women to maximise their health across their lives, and ensuring services are designed to maximise benefits for women
- maximising women's health in the workplace – deepening our understanding of how women's health issues can affect their workforce participation and outcomes, both with regards to female-specific issues such as the menopause, but also conditions that are more prevalent in women such as musculoskeletal conditions, depression or anxiety
- ensuring that research, evidence and data support improvements in women's health – inclusion of women and women's health in research and data collection and how that information is used, and driving participation in clinical trials to support improvements in women's health
- understanding and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on women's health – supporting women through the unique challenges they've faced during the pandemic.

There is strong evidence of the need for greater focus on women's health:

Although female life expectancy is higher than men in the UK, women on average spend less of their life in good health compared with men. Female life expectancy in this country has been improving more slowly than male life expectancy since the 1980s.

Less is known about conditions that only affect women, including common

gynaecological conditions which can have severe impacts on health and well-being, but for which there is currently little treatment. A key example of this is endometriosis with the average time for a woman to receive a diagnosis being 7 to 8 years, and with 40% of women needing 10 or more GP appointments before being referred to a specialist.

There is also evidence that the impact of female-specific health conditions such as heavy menstrual bleeding, endometriosis, pregnancy-related issues and the menopause on women's lives is overlooked. This includes the effect they can have on women's workforce participation, productivity, and outcomes.

High-quality research and evidence is essential to delivering improvements in women's health, yet studies suggest gender biases in clinical trials and research are contributing to worse health outcomes for women. Although women make up 51% of the population, there is less evidence and data on how conditions affect women differently. A University of Leeds study showed women with a total blockage of a coronary artery were 59% more likely to be misdiagnosed than men, and found that UK women had more than double the rate of death in the 30 days following heart attack compared with men.