

Description

Editors' Letter – Standing Together

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Dear Readers,

It's our pleasure to welcome Lucia Rocca-Ihenacho as our Guest Editor and her team to present this special issue, celebrating the ten-year anniversary of Maternity Unit Network (MUNet). Its publication coincides with International Day of the Midwife and makes this moment particularly meaningful. May issue's theme Standing Together reflects both the ethos of MUNet Community of Practice, and strength and solidarity of the wider global community of midwives across continents.

Article of the Month reflects on what MUNet is and how it has contributed to the continuous improvement of maternity care in Europe and beyond. It highlights MUNet's key areas of work, reflects on lessons learned and identifies opportunities to further expand its influence. Essentials revisits the defining characteristics of midwifery units and explains why they matter to women, families and maternity systems. Advancing Practice highlights the importance of European MU Standards and the Midwifery Unit Self-Assessment framework while reminding us of the significance of celebrating success, illustrated through the example of outstanding work conducted in Wales. Evidence Series presents outcomes of MUs in Europe, strengthening the growing evidence supporting midwife-led models of care and birth settings. Voices powerfully reinforces the importance of listening to women and service users', ensuring their preferences and experiences shapes service design. Complementing this perspective in Spotlight, authors critically discuss the urgent need to embed principles of equality and diversity principles in access to midwifery unit care. Next, Skills Summary outlines the competencies required for midwives to practice effectively in midwifery units.

Finally, Global Perspectives reports on the implementation of midwife-led birth centres in Afghanistan, discussing vision, policy, implementation, continuous improvement and current barriers and facilitators encountered along the way. Together, these contributions share a common thread: a commitment to valuing midwife-led care, embedding a bio-psycho-social philosophy of care and strengthening collaboration to amplify our collective impact.

At a time when achievements once considered fundamental can no longer be taken for granted, such as the right to having a midwife, access midwife-led birth settings and genuine choice for women and birthing people, our responsibility to advocate for these essential services and ensure women can access them becomes more important than ever. Protecting and expanding midwife-led care is essential for improving outcomes, and for safeguarding dignity, autonomy and equity in maternity care.

Standing Together is more than a theme, it's a call to action. Uplifting one another, practising intersectional leadership, and demonstrating courage are essential if we are to transform maternity services and advance a more just and equitable system of care. We warmly thank all the authors for their generosity and contributions to this special issue. We hope that readers will find inspiration in these pages and join us in strengthening the MUNet community of practice as we continue this collective journey.

Warmly,

Lucia Rocca-Ihenacho and Joanne Rack

Category

1. TPM Articles
2. TPM Journal

Tags

1. 2026
2. midwifery led units
3. midwifery-led
4. midwifery-led care

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