



Midwifery Unit Standards

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What is Midwifery Unit Network?

'Midwifery Unit Network (MUNet) is a European community of practice with a shared interest in supporting and promoting the development and growth of midwifery units (birth centres), which are managed and staffed by midwives'



OUR VISION

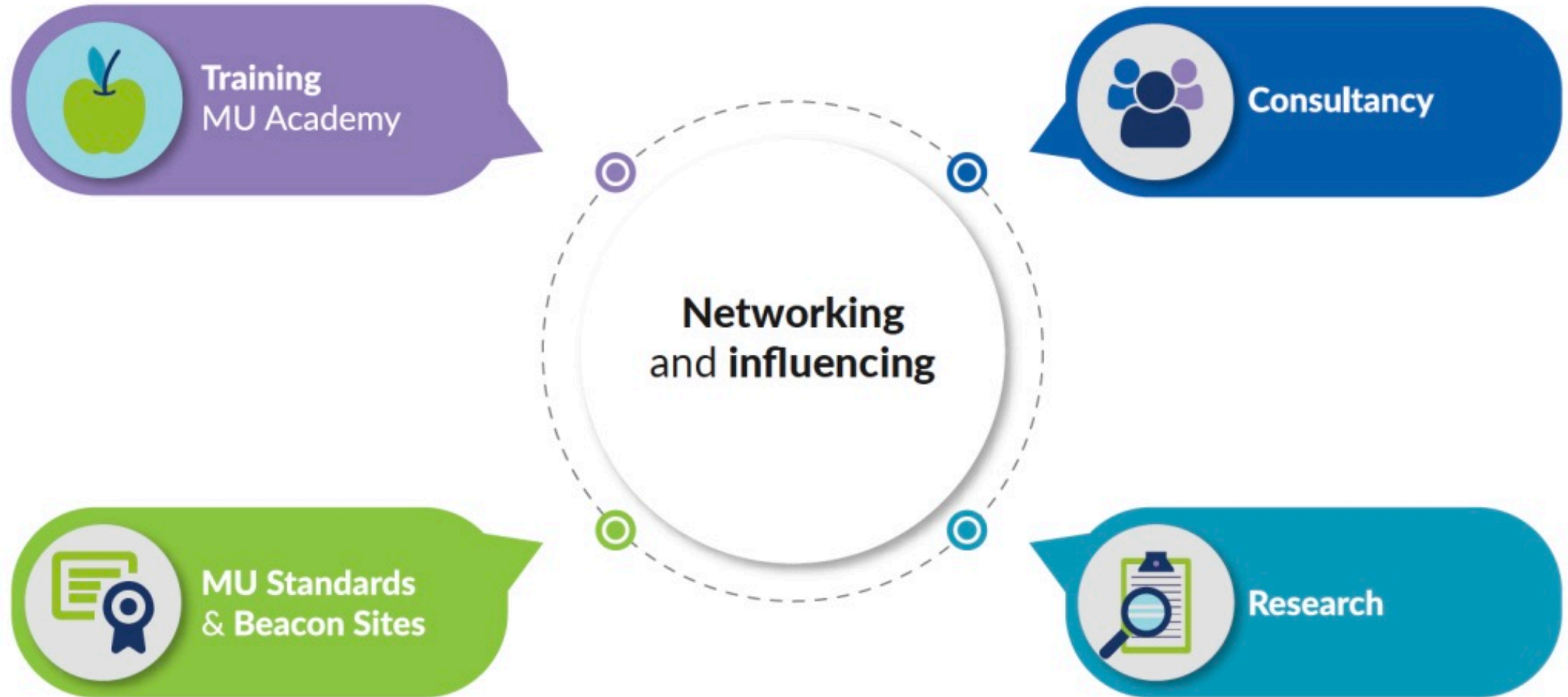
'For women and families to have positive childbirth experiences that enhance their physical and psychological wellbeing and give their babies an optimal start in life.'



OUR MISSION

To support and promote the development and growth of midwifery units (birth centres) throughout Europe, so they become the main care pathway for women with an uncomplicated pregnancy, providing holistic care to them and their families.







Background

- More than five million women give birth each year across the European Union (EU)
- Despite a significant improvement in maternity care, inequalities persist in access to women's healthcare in the EU
- Member States, including significant variations in maternity provision (EBCOG, 2014), practice and outcomes (Macfarlane et al, 2016)
- Scarf et al. (2018) have concluded that provision of midwifery-led settings should be expanded and systems to support change, including staff training and guidance, should be implemented

Background

- In England despite clear recommendations by NICE (2014), the number of births in MUs remains low
- Walsh et al. (2018) have estimated that 36% of birth could potentially be facilitated in MUs based on the 'risk profile' of pregnant women
- Only 13% of births currently occur in MUs (NMPA, 2017)
- Increasing access to midwifery-led settings is a national priority (NMPA, 2017)

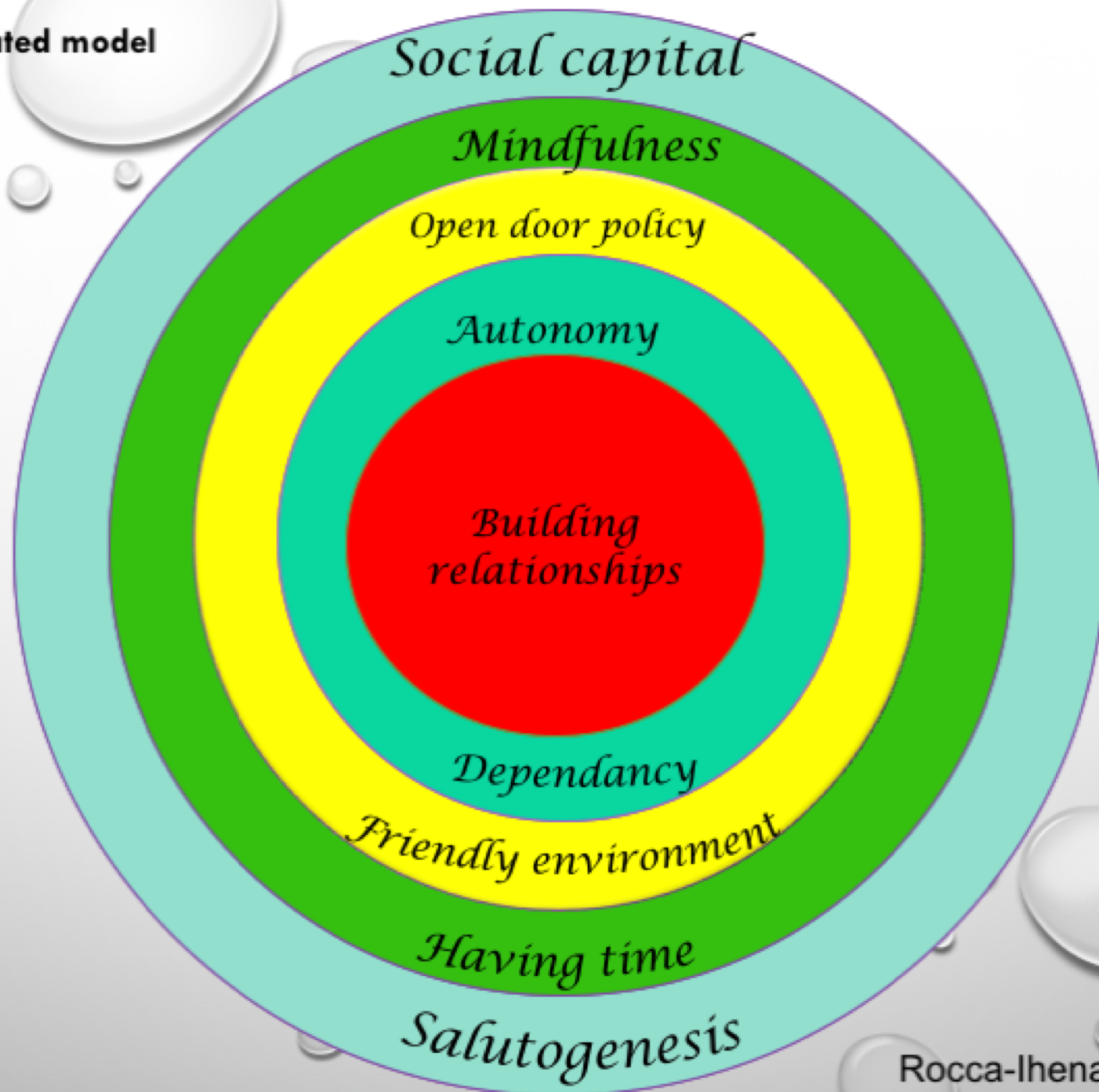
Some of the barriers

- Lack of leadership
- Competing priorities in the service
- Lack of marketing
- Lack of training
- MU not seen as a priority (midwives being pulled to the LW)
- Staff shortages
- Marketing and communication

Midwife-led care is different from that received on a labour ward in hospital as mothers and their families have access to their own room with a double bed, private en suite facilities, a sofa and balcony, plasma TV and a birthing pool. Partners can also stay overnight.

The centre is set up to create a relaxing environment for mothers during labour with as little medical intervention as possible. As there are no specialist doctors based at the centre, this type of birth is suitable for women considered to be having a 'low-risk' pregnancy.

An integrated model



Rocca-Ihenacho, 2016

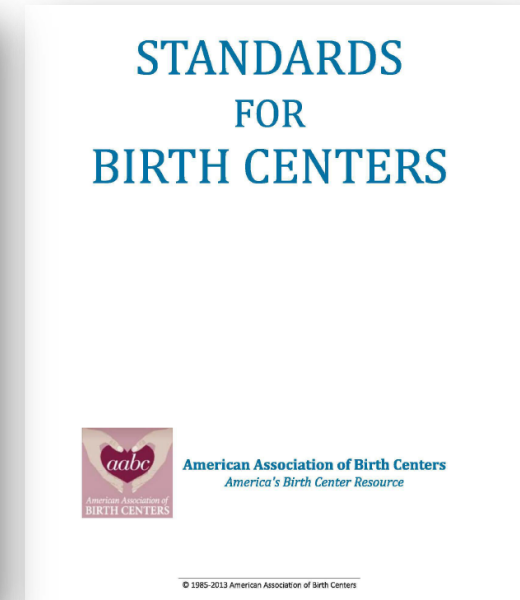
What is the aim of the Standards?

- To provide a guide for midwives, managers and commissioners across Europe in creating and continuously improving midwifery units
- To focus on philosophy of care and the organisation of services
- To improve the quality of maternity care, reduce variability of practices and facilitate a bio-psycho-social model of care
- To address the guidance gap in implementation of midwifery units



Why do we need Midwifery Unit Standards?

- These Standards follow extensive work by the American Association of Birth Centres (1985) and the Royal College of Midwives (2009)
- Priority emerged at the first MUNet European meeting in 2016
- Address substantial variability in philosophy, organisational characteristics and practice in MUs
- To clarify that MUs do not function in isolation but as part of a system
- To highlight the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration



The team

- Dr Lucia Rocca-Ihenacho, Project Lead
- Ellen Thael, Research fellow
- Laura Batinelli, Research midwife
- Nathalie Leister, Research fellow
- Dr Juliet Rayment, Freelance maternity researcher
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- Claire Biros, Research Assistant
- Deirdre Munro, Research associate
- Mary Newburn, MUNet Executive Manager
- Prof Chris McCourt, Academic Supervisor

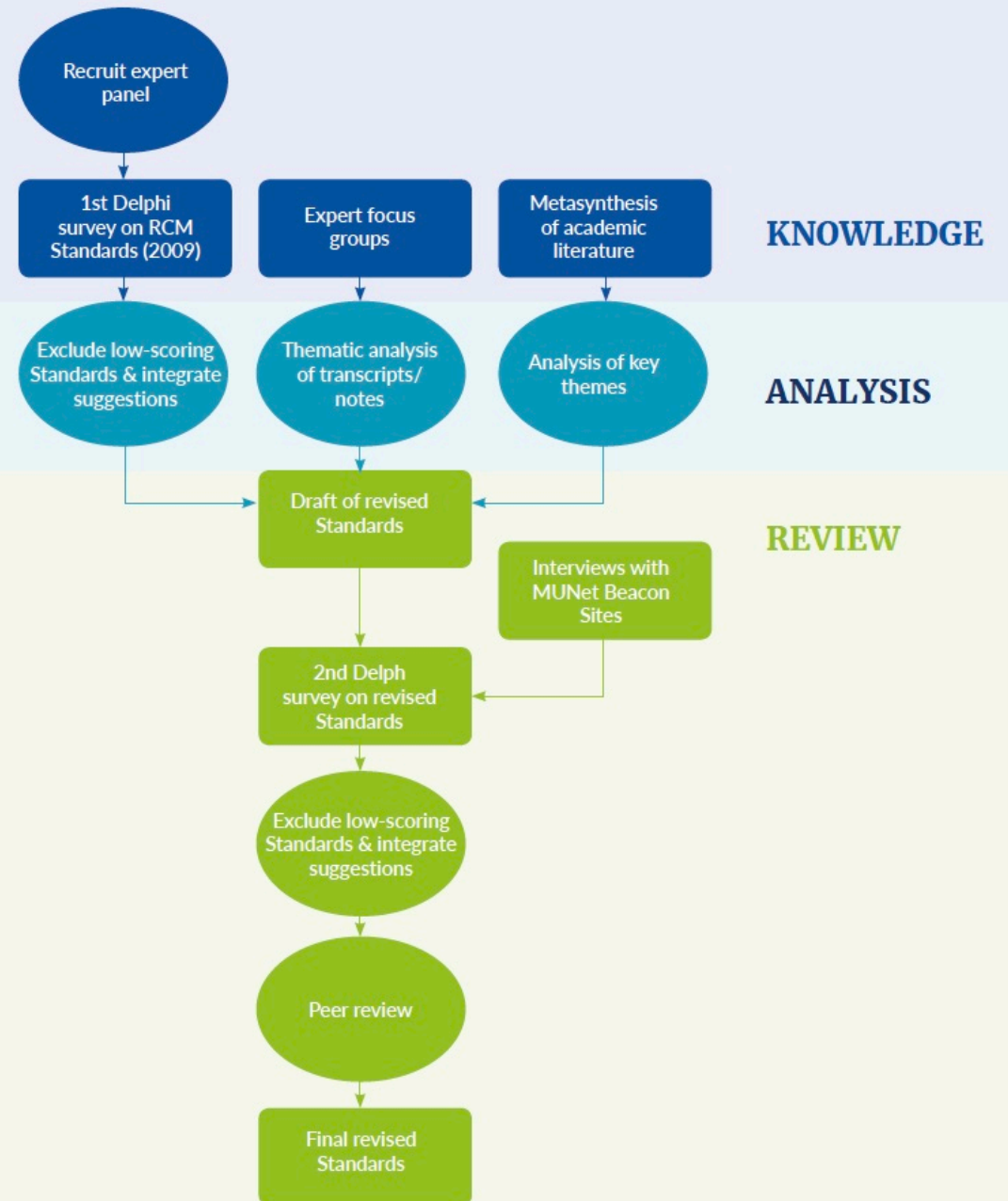


Methodology

A robust and inclusive, co-produced, evidence-based process:

1. A systematic review and synthesis
2. Delphi Study
3. Case studies interviews
4. Stakeholder meetings
5. Peer review

Figure 1- The process of creation of the Midwifery Unit Standards



Delphi Study

- The list of experts was created by requesting names to the the MUNet advisory group, via the RCM contacting all DOMs, HOMs and CMs in UK, researchers who published on MUs
- European MUs were contacted to provide names of experts
- A total of 122 respondents were invited
- 48% response rate
- Items scored for their importance on a scale of 1 to 5 plus open ended questions
- Items were eliminated if they scored below threshold of 75% in the ranking process

Stakeholder events



Challenges in developing the Standards

1. Navigating existing evidence and merging it with experts knowledge
2. Growing body of evidence, however gaps existed in practical knowledge
3. Evidence was abstract rather than specific
4. Questions about how to rate different forms of knowledge
5. Vast heterogeneity of maternity systems/practices in Europe
6. Terminology appropriate for European context



Midwifery Unit Standards (MU-standards) Themes



1. Bio-psycho-social model of Care
2. Equality, diversity and social inclusion
3. Working across professional and physical boundaries
4. Women's pathways of care
5. Staffing and workload
6. Knowledge, skills and training
7. Environment and facilities
8. Autonomy and accountability
9. Leadership
10. Clinical Governance

Safety

Salutogenesis



available to download on our new website
<http://www.midwiferyunitnetwork.org>



How can the Standards be used?

- The Standards are intended to be used alongside clinical guidelines.
- Although midwifery has been regulated at the European level, there is great diversity in care models and clinical practices between and within countries.
- Enable different services to self-assess/benchmark their philosophy of care, service organisation and related practices
- Develop implementation and improvement plans

COMING SOON... Indicators and self assessment tool!



How can the Standards be used?

- Catalyst for change
- Stimulate reflection and debate about improving service provision
- Consider local circumstances, opportunities and needs
- There is no 'one size fits all' prescription!
- Translation of the Standards in different countries must ensure fidelity

Disclaimer statement

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The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.



How to collaborate...



- Website, blog and with online resources
- Networking → different realities may have the answer to your problem!
- Facebook group, twitter
- MU Academy (eLearning + workshops)
- Consultancy

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