

Occupational health guidance for vulnerable community-based self-employed midwives

14 August 2020

This information is a guide for self-employed midwives claiming off the Section 88 Notice who fall into the 'vulnerable' category (see [covid19.govt.nz/individuals-and-households/health-and-wellbeing/vulnerable-people](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/individuals-and-households/health-and-wellbeing/vulnerable-people)). DHB and privately employed midwives should seek guidance from their employers.

Maternity services are considered an essential service (see [health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-current-situation/covid-19-essential-services-health-and-disability-system](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-current-situation/covid-19-essential-services-health-and-disability-system)). This document provides Ministry of Health guidance on assessing and minimising risk for vulnerable workers in the self-employed community-based midwifery workforce, while ensuring we maintain a workforce to respond to COVID-19 and deliver health services to the community.

COVID-19, like the flu, can be spread from person to person. When a person who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or talks, they may spread droplets containing the virus a short distance which quickly settle on surrounding surfaces. Basic hygiene measures are the most important way to stop the spread of infections, including COVID-19.

Remember - regularly disinfect surfaces; wash and dry your hands, cough into your elbow, don't touch your face; stay home if you're sick, and get tested for COVID-19 if you have flu like symptoms. It is highly recommended that you wear a face covering if you are out and about.

Alert Level 3 advice for vulnerable community-based midwives

If you are working at Level 3 as a community-based midwife and fall into the 'vulnerable' category, we recommend you discuss the situation with your practice partners and undertake a risk assessment (Table 1) to determine whether workplace restrictions or modifications are necessary.

As a health care professional providing an essential service you and your practice partners are the best people to determine what, if any, measures need to be put in place to allow you to continue to provide maternity services and to manage your health and safety. However, if you need further help understanding your own level of risk, we recommended that you discuss your situation with your general practitioner.

- If you have one of the conditions listed in the above link in and it is currently poorly controlled, you should stop providing in-person care for all women/whānau.
- If your chronic condition is well controlled with or without medication, or in remission, you should stop providing care to women that have confirmed COVID-19 or probable COVID-19.

- If you are pregnant you should stop providing care to women that have confirmed COVID-19 or probable COVID-19.

Alert Level 2 advice for vulnerable community-based midwives

If you are working at Level 2 as a community-based midwife and fall into the 'vulnerable' category, we recommend you take a precautionary approach and discuss the situation with your practice partners.

You may wish to undertake a risk assessment (Table 1) to determine whether workplace restrictions or modifications are necessary, however at Level 2 the goal is reduce the risk of transmission – the disease is contained, but the risk of community transmission remains.

As a health care professional providing an essential service you and your practice partners are the best people to determine what, if any, measures may need to be put in place to allow you to continue to provide maternity services and to manage your health and safety. However, if you need further help understanding your own level of risk, we recommended that you discuss your situation with your general practitioner.

Table 1. Risk assessment; direct patient contact for community-based self-employed midwives

Self-employed community-based midwife:	Woman has or is suspected of having COVID-19		Woman does not have or is not suspected of having COVID-19		Potential service delivery alternatives						
	Community based service	Hospital based service	Community based service	Hospital based service							
• is 70 years or older	No	No	No	No	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Provide non-contact support</td> <td>Phone-based assessments/appointments, and follow-up phone calls/emails Administrative tasks for the practice such as filing claims, referrals and booking registrations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>COVID-19 Response</td> <td>Register interest via the Ministry of Health¹</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stop working</td> <td>Apply for government support funds through MSD²</td> </tr> </table>	Provide non-contact support	Phone-based assessments/appointments, and follow-up phone calls/emails Administrative tasks for the practice such as filing claims, referrals and booking registrations	COVID-19 Response	Register interest via the Ministry of Health¹	Stop working	Apply for government support funds through MSD²
Provide non-contact support	Phone-based assessments/appointments, and follow-up phone calls/emails Administrative tasks for the practice such as filing claims, referrals and booking registrations										
COVID-19 Response	Register interest via the Ministry of Health¹										
Stop working	Apply for government support funds through MSD²										
• has an acute exacerbation or a poorly controlled disease	No	No	Yes	Yes							
• has a well-controlled chronic disease or immunosuppression	No	No	Yes	Yes							
• is pregnant	No	No	Yes	Yes							
• is pregnant with underlying chronic disease	No	No	Yes, but consider alternatives depending on severity of condition								

¹ health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals/expressions-interest-covid-19-response

² covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/financial-support

For further information see:

List of who is at higher risk: [covid19.govt.nz/help-and-advice/for-everyone/vulnerable-people](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/help-and-advice/for-everyone/vulnerable-people)

Risk assessment framework for identifying staff possibly vulnerable to the COVID-19 infection: [midwife.org.nz/midwives/covid-19/covid-19-updates](https://www.midwife.org.nz/midwives/covid-19/covid-19-updates)

Advice for financial support: [covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/financial-support](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/financial-support)

Register interest for COVID-19 response: [health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals/expressions-interest-covid-19-response](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals/expressions-interest-covid-19-response)

COVID-19 and pregnant health care workers and other at-risk workers: [ranzcog.edu.au/news/covid-19-and-pregnant-health-care-workers](https://www.ranzcog.edu.au/news/covid-19-and-pregnant-health-care-workers)