

UK maternity inquiries over 25 years—or 100?

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Edwards and colleagues rightly ask why UK maternity units keep producing the same failures despite 895 recommendations made since 2014.¹ In fact, the diagnosis of failure is older still. In her pioneering maternal mortality report of 1924, Janet Campbell showed not just that most maternal deaths were avoidable but that they reflected systemic rather than individual failure.² She then did what the current reviews stop short of: she took action to fix it. Antenatal clinics, midwife training, and the salaried midwifery service established by the 1936 Midwives Act. Maternal mortality fell more than 40-fold in the 50 years that followed. That success cannot be repeated today, but we can mark her forgotten centenary by learning again from her direct, pragmatic approach: to make changes to (re)build maternal health systems, not merely to recommend them.

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