

Transforming Perceptions of Midwifery Workstream

Midwifery as a Career of Choice FAQs April 2019

Questions are grouped according to similar questions with a theme and the answer provided.

Section A: Education

Section B: Work Experience

Section C: Emotional aspects of a Midwives role

Section D: Miscellaneous

The responses below have been submitted by Claire Mathews Deputy Head of Maternity at NHS England; Jonathon Cliffe, Band 6 Labour Ward Midwife in Warrington; Margaret Nakayaga, Newly Qualified Midwife in London and Jessica Perkins, Student Midwife in Northampton to ensure a range of perspectives to represent midwives at different points in their careers.

No. & section	Theme	Q&A
1a	Education	<p>What GCSE's do you need to become a midwife? Each university sets its own entry requirements to get onto a full-time degree in midwifery, but as a general guide you'll need at least five 9-4/A-C grade GCSEs including English, maths and a science subject.</p> <p>Jessica: Maths, English and Science are a must. I would consider taking a course such as health and social care so you can study how health care works.</p>
2a	Education	<p>What subjects should I take at 6th form? Midwifery degree courses often specify preferred or essential subjects, such as at least one science, for example biology, or social science subject so you must plan and check with the university of your choice before selecting your A Level subjects or equivalent.</p> <p>Jessica: You will most definitely need a science, whether that be Biology, chemistry or physics, you can also opt to take a social science, such as psychology.</p>

3a	Education	<p>What are the top ten universities to go to for midwifery? For more information about Midwifery degree courses please click the link below:</p> <p>https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/looking-course</p> <p>According to the Guardian Newspaper the following Universities rank currently as the top 10 for Nursing & Midwifery degree courses in the UK:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="719 456 1917 844"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rank</th><th>University</th><th>Location</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.</td><td>University of Edinburgh</td><td>Edinburgh, Scotland</td></tr> <tr> <td>2.</td><td>Swansea University</td><td>Swansea, Wales</td></tr> <tr> <td>3.</td><td>University of Glasgow</td><td>Glasgow, UK</td></tr> <tr> <td>4.</td><td>Queen Margaret University</td><td>Musselburgh, Scotland</td></tr> <tr> <td>5.</td><td>University of Liverpool</td><td>Liverpool, England</td></tr> <tr> <td>6.</td><td>University of Essex</td><td>Essex, England</td></tr> <tr> <td>7.</td><td>Coventry University</td><td>Coventry, England</td></tr> <tr> <td>8.</td><td>University of Huddersfield</td><td>Huddersfield, England</td></tr> <tr> <td>9.</td><td>Liverpool John Moores University</td><td>Liverpool, England</td></tr> <tr> <td>10.</td><td>Keele University</td><td>Newcastle-under-Lyme, England</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: 2019 Guardian University Guide rankings</p> <p>You can also search and compare other universities offering the Midwifery degree by clicking the following link:</p> <p>https://www.whatuni.com/degree-courses/search?subject=midwifery</p>	Rank	University	Location	1.	University of Edinburgh	Edinburgh, Scotland	2.	Swansea University	Swansea, Wales	3.	University of Glasgow	Glasgow, UK	4.	Queen Margaret University	Musselburgh, Scotland	5.	University of Liverpool	Liverpool, England	6.	University of Essex	Essex, England	7.	Coventry University	Coventry, England	8.	University of Huddersfield	Huddersfield, England	9.	Liverpool John Moores University	Liverpool, England	10.	Keele University	Newcastle-under-Lyme, England
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4a	Education	<p>How long is the course at university? Jessica: 3 Years, which includes a mix of placement hours, written and oral assignments.</p>																																	
5a	Education	<p>What is the best route into midwifery? Currently the only route into Midwifery is through an approved Midwifery degree course as set out above.</p>																																	
6a	Education	<p>What A levels do you need to become a midwife?</p>																																	

		<p>Entry requirements for midwifery degree courses vary because each university sets its own criteria, but you are likely to need three A-levels or equivalent level 3 qualifications, plus supporting 5 GCSEs as mentioned above in Q1a. You will need to contact universities directly to find out whether qualifications equivalent to A-levels or GCSEs are acceptable for their University.</p>
7a	Education	<p>Why is it so difficult to get into midwifery?</p> <p>Entry to a midwifery degree programme is very competitive, so you must aim for as high grades at A-level (or equivalent qualifications at level 3) as possible. Courses often specify preferred or essential subjects, such as at least one science, for example biology, or social science subject. The reason for this is that there are limited places at each University with many hundreds of applicants so the process is highly competitive.</p> <p>Jessica: The demand of the course can be quite difficult for people to manage, universities want to make sure they offer places to the right people with the right skills and qualities, as ultimately you will be a health care professional who will eventually be responsible for women's health and wellbeing and their baby.</p>
1b	Work Experience	<p>How do pupils in year 12 (17 years of age) get work experience in midwifery?</p> <p>Jessica: It is very difficult to get experience related to midwifery, the best advice I can give is to just inquire. Some hospitals/units may let you into maternity, to possibly observe the activity on the ward they will not allow you into any of the delivery rooms.</p> <p>Claire: there is no one route to get work experience in Midwifery. There are many reasons why this is difficult which seem like barriers but these barriers are in place to protect the women we care for and their babies. Each hospital has a volunteer service and this is probably the best point of contact when making enquires about work experience. Alternatively, supported by your Careers advisor you could write to your local Head of Midwifery and or Director of Midwifery to enquire as each hospital will have a different view and approach in relation to this subject.</p>
1c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>How do you keep up or deal with all the pressure when in the career and when going into the career?</p> <p>Margaret: Having a positive mindset helps a lot with pressure as you can move on very quickly if anything upsets you. You also must set goals for yourself and try and achieve them.</p>
2c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>What is the best part of being a midwife?</p> <p>Claire: For me the best part of being a midwife has changed over time with my varying roles but most importantly is being able to make a difference to a woman and her family at a very important life changing time. When I was a newly qualified midwife</p>

		and later as a community midwife it was about making a connection with each woman I cared for ensuring they had the best care they possibly could and being able to make a difference to that person on a one to one basis each time I looked after a woman and her baby. As my career progressed into management it moved to being able to make a difference to more than one woman at a time by improving facilities and care quality for the service I was working. Now it gives me great pride to know that the work I do is helping to make a difference for all pregnant women across England through the improvements we are making which is implemented through the midwives who provide the one to one clinical care.
3c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>What's the hardest part about being a midwife?</p> <p>Jessica: I find the decisions that some women make whilst pregnant can be difficult, we all hold our own views and opinions, and sometimes knowing decisions they are making can harm their baby, you must remove your personal feelings and explain the risks, so they are aware and can make an informed choice. Knowing a woman shouldn't be doing something because of the impact it can have on baby is sometimes difficult to understand.</p> <p>Margaret: Losing a baby or delivering an un-well baby to me is the hardest part of being a midwife as there is nothing you can say to the parents that makes the situation better.</p> <p>Claire: It is however important to be aware that in the midwifery profession there are lots of support mechanisms for both staff and parents who may need additional support. For midwives there are professional midwifery advocates (known as PMA's) available in every maternity unit in England to ensure support is readily available when required.</p>
4c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>How can one deal with the emotional rollercoaster of midwifery?</p> <p>Jessica: You just simply cope, university understand the pressure and strain you are under as a student, just keep accessing support, talk to one another as students, you are all in the same position and ultimately, they are the only ones who will completely understand what you are going through. If you are passionate about midwifery you always keep that at the forefront of your mind and remind yourself why you are doing this job. Once you qualify it is important to just keep accessing a good support network, whether that is through the hospital itself or from fellow colleagues.</p> <p>Margaret: Having a positive mindset helps a lot as you can move on very quickly if anyone or anything upsets you. I try not to get too involved with the family and that helps me not to become too emotional. It comes with time.</p>
5c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>Is midwifery rewarding?</p> <p>Jessica: Definitely. There is no other career like it, you bring new life into the world and watch individuals enter parenthood, whether that's for the first time or for the 6th that feeling of being able to support families though what is one of the most memorable times in any individual's life is just so valuable.</p>

6c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>What are the biggest challenges you have faced as a midwife?</p> <p>Claire: The challenges in midwifery vary depending on the role you are doing and where you are at in your own life journey. As a student, as noted in Q1d, having free time while studying is difficult but improves as you qualify. As a qualified midwife it is can be when something doesn't go as well as it could and there is a poor outcome. For other midwives who are mothers or fathers themselves it can be balancing family commitments with work commitments and shift working but as children grow again this usually improves. This can then manifest itself again as midwives get older and their caring responsibilities at home involve caring for elderly parents. For midwifery managers it can be many things including ensuring there are enough staff available to provide the care women need on a shift by shift basis, dealing with staffing issues or even supporting staff and families when there has been a poor outcome.</p>
7c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>Is there any support for a qualified midwife if they have experienced a traumatic birth/are struggling with a situation?</p> <p>Margaret: Yes, we have debriefing for the midwife involved in any incident and this can be done with your manager, the coordinator or any of your colleagues if you want. Also for very serious incidences you can ask for counselling to help you work through it, there are many different avenues of support available including Professional Midwifery Advocates (PMA).</p>
8c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>How do you learn to deal with emotional situations such as still births and the emotional stress and anxiety caused?</p> <p>Jessica: When a traumatic event like this occurs, all members of staff involved in the care have a debrief at the end of their shift, this allows everybody to express how they feel, make sense of what has happened and understand that these things unfortunately do happen but you are never alone, there are a team of people involved who you can turn to for support.</p> <p>Claire: As mentioned in Q7c, there are always PMA's available to support midwives during such emotionally difficult times.</p>
9c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>How do you develop emotional resilience?</p> <p>Claire: This is a difficult question to answer as emotional resilience develops over time and through experience following exposure to many different situations. It is also something is developed through peer support as mentioned many times and through the support of the midwifery leaders and PMA's. There is no one right answer to share how to develop emotional resilience it starts developing at University and continues every day in the role and can be supported by reflective practice.</p>
10c	Emotional aspects of a Midwives role	<p>What is the impact of delivering a stillborn baby and how do you deal with this as a midwife?</p> <p>Jessica: Ultimately no midwife wants the outcome of a pregnancy to end in stillbirth, however it is sometimes the nature of the job. The impact on the family varies from family to family, however they still need the respect and support to get thorough the labour as any other woman would need. The first time you witness a stillbirth can be quite traumatic for all involved, all</p>

		<p>women react to this situation differently. Just ensuring you ask the woman what she wants and facilitating that is just a small impact you can have to turn what is a very difficult process into a memorable event, and the family will remember this and appreciate your efforts. As a midwife it is important to access support from other members of staff and those who were involved in the care of this woman.</p> <p>Margaret: Reflection and debriefing for the midwife are important. This can be done with your manager, the coordinator or any of your colleagues. There is lots of support available if you are ever struggling.</p>
1d	Miscellaneous	<p>Do you make any personal sacrifices with the job?</p> <p>Jessica: You sacrifice a lot of your free time and dedicate yourself to placement hours and assignment writing which leave you very little opportunity to take time out for yourself and meet up with family and friends. Studying is not forever though, only 3 years and this will improve once qualified and no longer studying full time.</p> <p>Margaret: Yes, I do as sometimes I end up leaving work late if the handover was late.</p> <p>Claire: Sometimes a midwife may choose to stay late if a woman they are caring for and have built up a close relationship and rapport with is close to birthing her baby, but of course this is personal choice and although it may to some seem like a sacrifice it is also very rewarding. Midwifery isn't a 9-5 job and it is important to be aware of that when entering the profession.</p>
2d	Miscellaneous	<p>What's it like being a male in midwifery?</p> <p>Jonathon: midwifery has predominantly always been a female profession, and in fact prior to the mid-80s, it was illegal for men to practice as midwives.</p> <p>Women have choice; choice about their care, where they have their care and who provides their care. This should never be forgotten. Occasionally some women would prefer a female midwife provide their care, however I very rarely encounter issues within practice regarding the fact I am a man providing midwifery care. As a midwife you must be sensitive to women's needs, physical, emotional, mental and cultural needs, so respecting their choice of care provider is an important aspect of midwifery care. Midwives have a duty to respect the choice of a woman if her choice is to have a female midwife provide her care.</p>
3d	Miscellaneous	<p>If you're a midwife how much do you earn?</p> <p>Midwives currently commence in full time employment on what is known as mid-point band 5 and equates to £26,220 per year. Some midwives who live and or work in London earn a little more due to the high cost of living in London, this is known as London weighting. Once a midwife has been qualified for 1-2 years they are moved onto the lower point on the band 6</p>

		<p>scale following a period of what is known as preceptorship, the first point on band 6 equates to £30,401 per year. Once the preceptorship phase is complete midwives are entitled to what is known as an incremental pay rise each year depending on their performance.</p> <p>For more detailed information on the pay bands and pay points for nurses and midwives in the NHS click the following link: https://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/pay-and-reward/agenda-for-change/pay-scales/annual</p>
4d	Miscellaneous	<p>Does your job make you feel good about yourself?</p> <p>Jessica: I have a huge amount of job satisfaction, and I can honestly say when I go home from a shift, wherever I am, I feel so privileged to be part of the journey whether that is right at the beginning, during the delivery or at the end with mum and baby, these women have allowed you into their life to offer support and advice.</p> <p>Margaret: Yes, it does make me feel good about myself especially when I provide women with the best care and I see what difference it makes in their lives. Also, when I support parents to bring a new life in the world and I see the smile or tears in their eyes when they first hold their baby, this gives me great satisfaction.</p> <p>Claire: I am very proud to be a midwife and to have helped so many women over the years during this time in their lives. Living close to where I worked as a clinical midwife has given me the opportunity to watch the babies I cared for grow into children, young adults and now even see them become parents themselves. Most women always remember their midwife and I always feel proud when I am out and about when a woman openly shares with her child that I was her midwife, it makes me feel very special and privileged to have been part of their experience.</p>
5d	Miscellaneous	<p>Is it hard to watch people in pain?</p> <p>Jessica: Sometimes yes, you always remember that the body knows what to do and these women will get through the pain and have the most precious gift at the end, once that baby is placed into that woman's arms she is just overwhelmed by this little human and that almost distracts the woman from her pain.</p> <p>Margaret: It is very hard to watch women in pain but there are many forms of pain relief which we offer to the women. We are also aware that without pain the baby cannot be born therefore we do encourage women to breathe through the pain knowing that after all, there will be joy when the baby is delivered.</p> <p>Claire: This is a part of the role that midwives develop resilience with time. The more experienced a midwife becomes the more able they are to understand the birthing process and to recognise how the body behaves during the different stages of labour. So, although initially it can seem hard it is also an essential part of the role for a midwife to watch and observe the process and support the woman manage her pain either naturally or with what we call analgesia i.e. painkillers.</p>

6d	Miscellaneous	<p>Do women poo themselves by accident if they have epidural during labour?</p> <p>Jessica: It is very normal for women to open their bowels in labour regardless of the pain relief they have had, this is usually a very good indicator that labour is progressing, as baby gets closer to delivery they press on the bowels which can cause a bowel movement.</p>
7d	Miscellaneous	<p>Roughly how many women are you in charge of each day? Can it be more than one at a time?</p> <p>Margaret: It depends on where you work. For instance, on the labour ward or birth centre it's usually 1:1 so 1 woman at a time but on the postnatal ward you may have up to 8 women and babies to care for during your shift.</p>
8d		<p>What made you become a midwife?</p> <p>Jessica: My decision to study midwifery came from a personal family experience my mum had, the way she described her midwife made me think about the impact one person can have on a woman's life and I wanted to be able to offer women support the way that midwife looked after my mother when she was in a very traumatic situation. Once I looked further into the profession I fell in love with the whole idea of becoming a midwife and an advocate and supporting women's birth choices.</p>
9d		<p>Is working in the hospital as a midwife more enjoyable than being a community midwife and do you get the same experience or is one tougher than the other?</p> <p>Jessica: Everyone is different, we all enjoy specific areas more than others, in the hospital you are not only looking after women who are about to deliver their baby, but also there are wards that look after women who are pregnant and are suffering with health issues that require a hospital admission, and you also look after the women on the postnatal ward once they have had their babies, helping these women with feeding their baby and ensuring they are being supported to care for themselves and their baby.</p> <p>In the community you have a caseload of women you look after in the pregnancy period, they come into a clinic and as a community midwife you make sure they are feeling well, take their blood pressure, have a feel of their tummy and use what we call a sonic aid to use on the woman's tummy to listen for the baby's heartbeat. There are also other roles that midwives can venture into, depending on what you are more passionate about.</p>
10d		<p>Can I be a midwife?</p> <p>Jessica: You can be anything you want to be if you work hard and are passionate.</p>