



research and development

strategy 2025-2027



Royal College
of Midwives

Welcome to the RCM research and development strategy 2025-27

The RCM's research and development strategy has been developed by midwives working clinically, in academia, in education and, by student midwives, midwifery support workers (MSWs), maternity care assistants (MCAs) and users of maternity services from across the United Kingdom.

Evidence-based care is fundamental to midwives, student midwives, MSWs and MCAs and we all have a unique contribution to informing the evidence base. The RCM has research evidence at its core and is committed to using its influence to improve the research landscape for the benefit of women, babies and their families. As an organisation we are committed to amplifying the voices of women, birthing people and their families within midwifery and perinatal research to ensure they are involved in improving the care they receive.

Every moment of every day, in every part of the United Kingdom, families are being supported by midwives, MSWs and MCAs. As part of their work, they conduct research that underpins the evidence, they educate and lead and they provide crucial care to women and babies. The impact of the midwifery community should not be underestimated. The RCM is committed to ensuring the midwifery community is integral to multi-disciplinary research and service improvements and will work with funders to ensure research practice is embedded within all areas of maternity care.

High quality care and practice needs to be underpinned by evidence and provided by midwives who think critically about the care that they provide. This critical thinking requires midwives to remain curious, to question usual customs and practice and to develop skills in searching and reading the evidence with a critical eye. This research strategy provides a framework for the College and its members to embed research-mindedness throughout the profession and aligns with Nursing and Midwifery Council midwife standards (NMC, 2023).

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Foreword from RCM's President

As champions of evidence-based practice, the RCM has always been at the forefront of advancing the midwifery profession through research, education and collaboration with its members. The 2025-2027 research and development strategy sets out a clear and ambitious strategy to deepen the roles of midwives, student midwives, maternity support workers and maternity care assistants in driving forward vital research that improves the lives and outcomes of women, birthing people and their families.

Research in maternity care is fundamental to improving outcomes. Despite the crucial role that midwives and maternity professionals play in providing care, maternity care still faces a significant gap in research funding compared to other healthcare specialties. This underinvestment limits the potential to generate new evidence that can drive improvements, inform policy decisions, and enhance the quality of care delivered in maternity settings. Without sufficient funding and focus on maternity research, we risk falling behind in addressing challenges such as maternal mental health, the impact of socio-economic factors on birth outcomes, and disparities in care among different ethnic and cultural groups. The RCM 2025-2027 research and development strategy is a vital step in addressing this imbalance. It is also a call to action for our members to develop as researchers and contribute to shaping the future of maternity care.

Together we can ensure that the care we provide is underpinned by the latest evidenced-based practice - improving outcomes for generations to come.

President, Royal College of Midwives

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Role of the RCM

The Royal College of Midwives is the UK's only membership body run for the midwifery community and by the midwifery community, by your side throughout your career.

We are with midwives, student midwives, MSWs and MCAs, day to day, throughout their careers, from the moment they start their education and training to the day they leave the profession. Our work is guided and shaped by our members, and our mission is to improve their working lives, to amplify their voices and to build our midwifery community.

Our goals and how we aim to achieve them

Support midwives, student midwives, MSWs and MCAs to contribute to maternity research

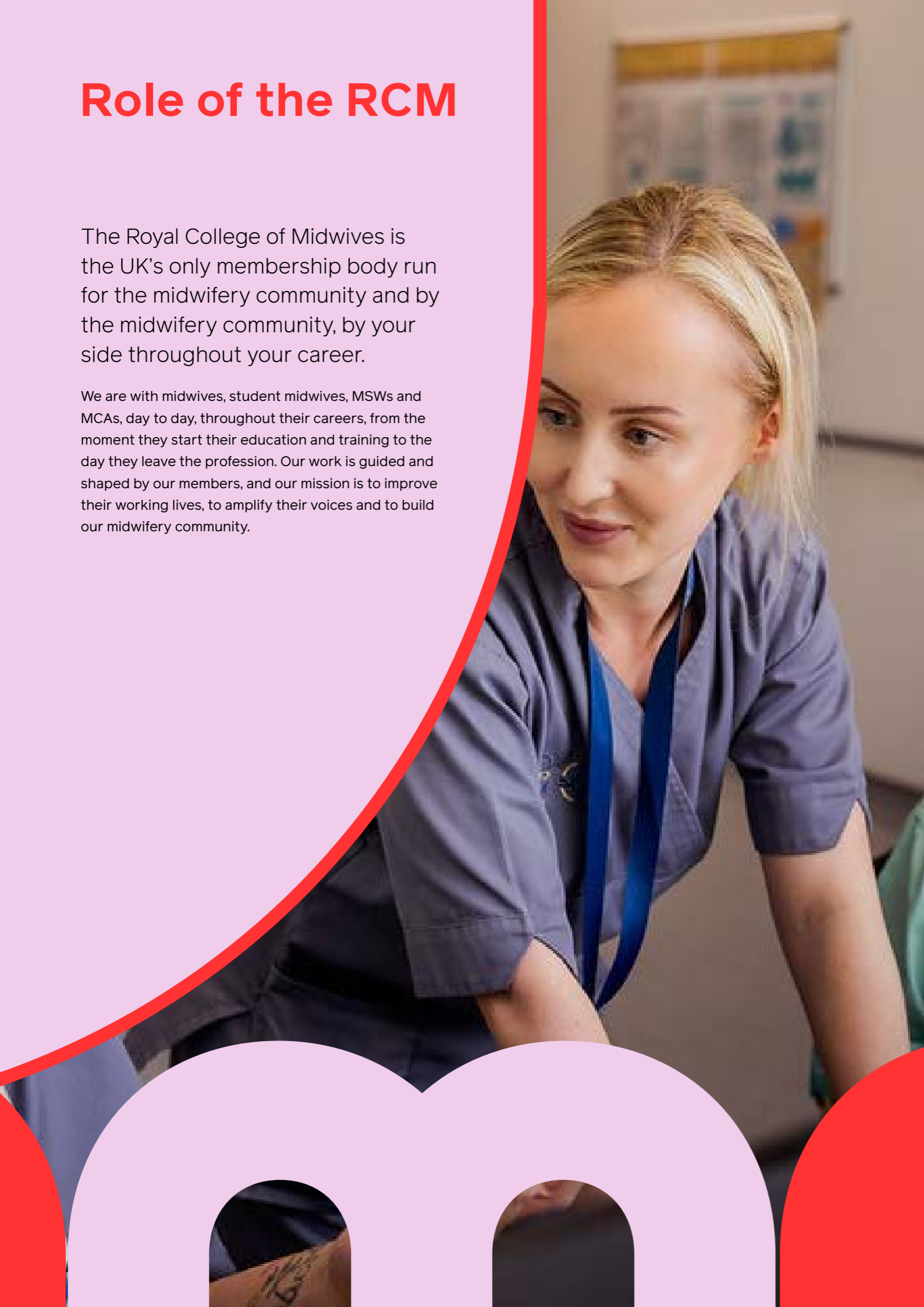
- Support midwives, midwifery students and MSWs and MCAs to develop their research skills
- Promote the career development of midwifery researchers
- Support an increase in midwifery research capacity
- Promote the dissemination and implementation of midwifery-led studies

Maximise the RCM's role as an advocate for greater funding and midwifery leadership for research into improving maternity services

- Promote the RCM top 10 priorities to researchers, funding bodies and policy makers, members and stakeholders
- Promote appropriate midwifery representation on funding boards
- Provide and promote research themed education resources
- Develop partnerships, publications and participation in key forums

Ensure the RCM research and development strategy remains equitable, diverse and inclusive to all

- Focus the promotion of research to and with global majority members
- Be visible as the RCM Research Team to professional groups from the global majority
- Champion research questions from the RCM/JLA Research Prioritisation Project, whether or not in the final 10.
- Develop a clear pathway to embed EDI principles
- Promote EDI principles in RCM supported research requests





What success looks like



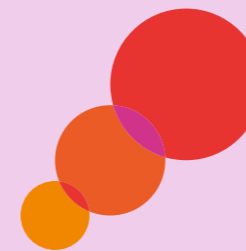
The midwifery community contributes to and leads maternity research that improves care and outcomes for service users and staff



The midwifery profession is recognised for its unique contribution to perinatal research



Research based upon midwifery perspectives, practices, or priorities is actively encouraged and supported within the broader field of maternity care



The voices of women, birthing people and their families are amplified within midwifery and perinatal research



References and acknowledgements

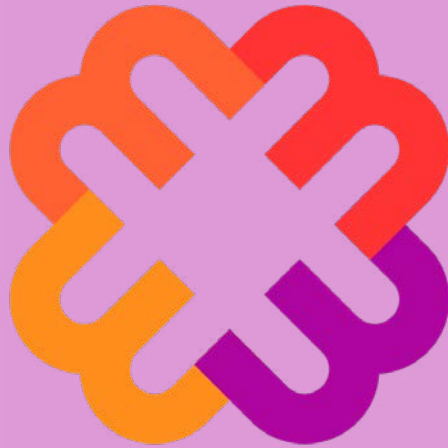
- NMC (2023) www.nmc.org.uk/standards-for-education-and-training/standards-framework-for-nursing-and-midwifery-education/

RCM Research strategy working Group

- Mary Alvarez, Senior Research Midwife, NIHR Senior Research Leader
- Catherine Cargill, Newly qualified midwife
- Jenny Cunningham, Research Advisor, RCM
- Dr Judith Field, Research Advisor, RCM
- Daniella Giddings, Community Midwife Support Worker
- Katie Handley, Clinical Lead for Maternal and Child Health, Genomics England
- Dr Suzanne Hardacre, Director of Midwifery, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

- Fi Hitchcock, Student/Newly qualified midwife
- Dalvir Kandola, Consultant Midwife - lead for inclusivity at University Hospitals of Leicester
- Dr Connie McLuckie, Lead Midwife for Education, Edinburgh Napier University
- Michelle Mckay, Course Director: Nursing and Midwifery; University of Staffordshire
- Dawn Marshall, Midwife
- Prof Hora Soltani FRCM, Professor of Maternal and Infant Health, Sheffield Hallam University
- Kate Stringer, Midwifery Advisor International Confederation of Midwives
- Dr Sara Webb FRCM, Head of Information and Research Services, RCM
- Anne Wilson, National Officer, Northern Ireland, RCM





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