



midwives:

improving health, in
pregnancy and beyond



Royal College
of Midwives

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Midwives support around 635,000 births each year in the UK. They are the lead professionals for most pregnancies and births providing expert care that keeps women and babies safe through pregnancy, birth and early weeks of life and work closely with other health professionals when specialist care is needed.



1. Pregnancy care

- Monitor the health of pregnant women through checks and blood tests to identify conditions such as diabetes
- Monitor the baby's growth and wellbeing to identify babies who are not growing as expected or may be at risk
- Promote physical and mental health, including advice on nutrition, exercise and emotional wellbeing
- Provide information and listen to women to support informed choices about pregnancy and birth
- Identify risks or complications early and refer to obstetricians or other specialists when needed
- Offer emotional support and help families prepare for labour and parenthood

2. Care during labour and birth

- Lead care for women during their labour and birth at home, in midwife-led units and in hospitals
- Support labour and birth while recognising complications, working with the multi-professional maternity team
- Monitor and support the well-being of the woman and baby (vital signs, labour progress)
- Provide pain relief options including caring for women in water during labour and birth
- Act quickly if concerns arise, raising them promptly and working with the wider maternity team



3. Care after birth

- Check the physical and mental recovery of mothers and arrange further care if needed
- Monitor newborn health, feeding and weight, and carry out screening for some conditions
- Support infant feeding and early newborn care
- Provide guidance on safe sleeping, bonding and early parenting
- Handover care to health visitors once the early postnatal period ends



4. Health promotion and Education

- Midwives support and advise on:
- Healthy lifestyles during pregnancy and early family life
- Vaccinations in pregnancy
- Birth choices and planning
- Infant feeding
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Contraception after childbirth
- This education helps prevent problems, supports informed decision-making and improves long-term health outcomes

5. Keeping families safe

Midwives recognise and act on concerns related to:

- Violence against women and girls
- Substance use
- Homelessness and poverty
- Safeguarding risks for children or vulnerable adults
- This role is vital in protecting families at times of increased vulnerability



6. Working across settings and teams

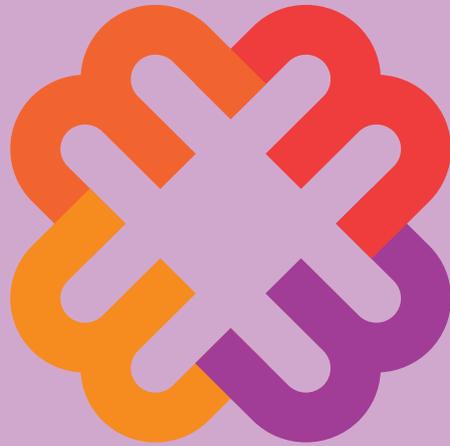
- Midwives work in NHS hospitals, birth centres, community teams and people's homes, and some are private practitioners
- They work both independently and as part of multidisciplinary teams, alongside maternity support workers (MSWs), students, neonatologists, anaesthetists, obstetricians, GPs, health visitors, and other healthcare professionals. This ensures maternity care is joined-up, continuous and safe, with the best possible experience for women and babies
- Some midwives also work as researchers, educators and leaders, contributing to service improvement, policy development, evidence-based practice and workforce development

7. A distinct profession

- Midwives are accountable for the care and support of women and babies, working in partnership with women and their families
- Registered professionals with a protected legal title - only a registered midwife, or medical doctor, may 'attend on' a woman in childbirth (other than in an emergency)
- Educated to degree level and regulated by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)
- Required to maintain skills, learning and safe practice throughout their careers



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