



## **Frequently asked questions about becoming a midwife**

### **How do you become a midwife?**

You can become a midwife by undertaking a Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) approved degree course and university leading to a midwifery qualification with NMC registration. A midwifery degree is a minimum of three years and 4600 hours split between academic and clinical education.

Current registered nurses on the adult part of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) register can opt to undertake an additional programme of education and gain a second professional registration as midwife. The post graduate shortened route comprises a minimum of two years and 3600 split between academic and clinical education.

For applicants with a previous first degree, there are some pre-registration midwifery MSc course providing a post graduate option to become a midwife at master's level. A full list of approved universities can be found on the NMC website.

Each university will have its own specific entry criteria, so it is best to check with the individual institution.

Application is through the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

Entry can be competitive, and many students have qualifications and experience higher than the minimum requirements.

### **What does a midwife do?**

When people think about about midwives, they often think about birth. They picture a midwife assisting a woman as they give birth to her newborn baby. This is a vital part of a midwife's work, but the role includes so much more.

A midwife is usually the first and main contact for the woman during her pregnancy, throughout labour and the early postnatal period. Midwives are responsible for providing care and supporting <https://www.rcm.org.uk/promoting/education-hub/become-a-midwife/>

women to make informed choices about their care. They carry out clinical examinations, provide health and parent education and support women and their families throughout the childbearing process to help them adjust to their parental role. The midwife also works in partnership with other health and social care services to meet individual needs; for example, young adults, women who are socially excluded, disabled and from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

## How midwives work

Midwives work in all health care settings in urban, remote and rural settings; for example, in the maternity unit of a large general hospital, in smaller stand-alone maternity units, in private maternity hospitals, in group practices, at birth centres, with general practitioners and in the community.

The majority of midwives practice within the NHS, working with other midwives or as part of a small team, with other health care professionals such as obstetricians, neonatologists, anaesthetists, general practitioners, health visitors and support staff. Midwives provide woman-centred integrated care, which requires them to work shifts over 7 days of the week including day and night duty. Many midwives have on-call rotas and work both within a hospital or community setting such as birth centres, midwifery led units and a woman's home.

## Career prospects

Once registered, midwives can progress their career in clinical practice. For example in specialist midwife roles in perinatal mental health or public health, education, for example as a lecturer working in universities, or practice education, research, undertaking and supporting research projects, leadership and management, clinical governance and supervision. Midwives may choose to undertake further post registration education and study at masters or doctorate level.

## What advice would the RCM give to help make my application stand out?

**Speak to the university** that you wish to apply to. It is advisable to attend any open evening/open day events and speak to the midwifery academic team, as this is a great opportunity to gain information about the course and its specific requirements. It will also give you the opportunity to meet current students and discover what the course is really like. Find out how the course is structured, where your clinical placements are likely to be and what support is available. Remember it is just as important that you pick the right course for you as it is for the university to select the right candidates.

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**Obtaining some work experience** in a maternity unit or in a health or social care setting may also be helpful, as is having a conversation with a midwife, however gaining an observational experience may be difficult. So may sure you do your research to understand what the role of the midwife is and develop an understanding of the wider health issues that may affect maternity care. This will help you to confirm that a career in midwifery is right for you. Some people seek employment as a healthcare support worker, and this can be helpful in giving you an opportunity to work alongside midwives, women and babies, and this gives a picture of what it might be like to be a midwife.

When you have received all the application documentation, it is important that you make every effort to **complete the form correctly and truthfully**. Make a copy and complete a draft first. It is a good idea to then get this looked at by someone else for spelling mistakes and errors and then, when you are happy with it, complete the final form. Keep a copy of your application, as during your interview you are likely to be asked questions about your statement.

**You will need to prepare a strong personal statement** to evidence that you understand the role of the midwife and what you did to find out that midwifery was the right career choice for you. You will not be expected to be an expert on what a midwife does, but they will expect you to have done some preparation. Think about the values or qualities of being a good midwife and what evidence you have of these. Don't just list all things that you have done but highlight experiences that demonstrate what you have learnt and how that experience is transferable to midwifery.

If your statement is successful, you will be interviewed so make sure your personality shines through on the statement, and that you can back up your claims with evidence.

## How do I prepare for my interview?

### **If you are invited for an interview, take your time to prepare for it.**

Interviews vary, but often involve some general discussions, group work and role play. Some universities may ask you to complete a timed written essay on a topic which you should have been given information about prior to the interview. You may also be asked to complete a short maths test to demonstrate an understanding of basic maths.

As well as the above, there could be a one-to-one interview, usually with at least two interviewers who are likely to be a university lecturer and a practising midwife and perhaps a maternity service user.

**To give yourself your best chance during this interview**, you should prepare in advance so that you are well informed about recent news related to midwifery, infant and other health care-related issues. All of this preparation will ensure you have a good understanding of the role of the midwife and what support they can offer new parents. Then, if you are asked why you want to be a midwife, you will avoid cliches such as 'I really like babies or because I watched a midwifery TV programme; it may have sparked your interest but what did you do to find out the realities of the profession. It is important that you are aware that the role and

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responsibilities of qualified midwives which is different from other associate healthcare professional roles, such as nursing.

The courses are demanding as you will be undertaking academic study whilst also working clinical shifts. You therefore need to be able to demonstrate that you have an understanding of the rigours and demands of the course, that you are able to organise your time effectively and that you have support from family and friends.

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