



Joint statement on expanding the midwifery workforce in the Covid-19 outbreak

Nursing and midwifery professionals are the bedrock of our health and care workforce and at the heart of responding to Covid-19 today, tomorrow in the coming weeks ahead.

We recognise this is undoubtedly the most challenging, difficult and pressurised time in generations for teams working in health and social care settings right across the UK.

On behalf of all of us, thank you to each and every one of you for your continuing dedication and commitment in dealing with this extraordinary situation to the best of your abilities.

These unprecedented times call for clear action in ensuring as many people as possible can deliver the care that is needed in a way that is safe and effective for all concerned to meet demand.

As leaders of the UK nursing and midwifery community, we have been working hard to make sure as many people with the right skills and knowledge can contribute to help us meet the challenges above.

There are three actions that are being put into place to deal with this emergency situation and we will continue to explore other options to expand the midwifery workforce as this rapidly changing situation evolves:

1. Once the UK Government has passed the legislation to enable the NMC to establish a Covid-19 temporary emergency register our first focus will be to invite those midwives who have left the register within the last three years to opt in should they wish to do so.
2. Encourage those midwives who are currently on the register but not working in clinical care to consider coming into clinical practice during this time.
3. Change the nature of the programme for undergraduate midwifery students so that they can opt to undertake their final six months of their programme as a clinical placement.

So we can deliver these outcomes as quickly as possible, we have agreed and signed up to the joint working commitments as follows:

The Nursing and Midwifery Council agrees to:

- Write out to those midwives who have left the register in the last three years inviting them to join the NMC Covid-19 temporary register. No fee will be applicable for registrants on the Covid-19 temporary register.
- Introduce varied emergency education standards to enable the last six months in the final year of undergraduate midwifery degrees to be spent in clinical placement.
- To support this, the NMC understands that it will not be possible for students on clinical placement to be supernumerary in this emergency situation but will expect students to be supervised and work within an appropriate delegated framework.
- Initially extend the revalidation period for current registered midwives by an additional three months and seek further flexibility from the UK Government for the future.

The Chief Nursing Officers for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales and their Chief Midwifery Officers/Midwives agree to:

- Develop appropriate deployment guidance for employers, professionals and students that are bespoke for each of the four countries of the UK, working with stakeholders, including the terms and conditions and remuneration for the students whose final six months are spent in clinical placement. Whatever choice they make, no student will be disadvantaged.
- Establish a point of contact (telephone helpline, website) for all health and social care employers in all four nations across the UK that can provide appropriate information for potential registrants and final year students.

Council of Deans of Health agrees to:

- Work with Approved Education Institutions (AEIs) and local employers to place student midwives in clinical placements appropriately in all four nations across the UK.
- Work with Approved Education Institutions to formally sign off each student as per normal processes, taking personal circumstances into consideration before putting them forward for the register (full). Depending upon individual circumstances, this may require additional supernumerary clinical practice or theoretical learning.

Royal Colleges and Trade Unions representing midwives and students agrees to:

- Provide expertise with and on behalf of their memberships to inform the development and implementation of guidance, ensuring individual choice is paramount within the context of emergency measures.
- Negotiate employment terms and conditions within emergency measures.
- Support their registered midwife members in non-clinical roles who may be willing to return to clinical practice during the emergency where appropriate.

UK Government Department of Health and Social Care is:

- Working with other stakeholders, government bodies and devolved administrations to clarify policies concerning pay, pensions, training and student loans.
- Supporting the NMC with emergency changes to its rules to allow it to take the actions set out above.
- Agreeing emergency changes to the rules to enable the action outlined above to be effective.

In conclusion

We recognise that these are difficult and worrying times for everyone involved. We know that some of you are fearful for the future in this unprecedented situation. However, we also know that as skilled, dedicated professionals, midwives will want to rise to the challenge. We need to work together and support each other and that way we will get through this, providing the care and support patients and the public will need.

In a rapidly changing situation, we do not yet have all the answers but please be assured that as leaders of the midwifery community, we are committed to continuing our work together and sharing further updates with you as soon as we are able to.



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