



Information for Midwives working outside of the Midwifery Scope of Practice

24 October 2004

The Midwifery Council wishes to clarify the intention behind the statement in the September 2004 newsletter (page 6) relating to the decision not to extend the Midwifery Scope of Practice to include abortion services, family planning and sexual and reproductive health. It also wishes to address specific questions that have been raised in relation to midwives working in neonatal intensive care areas and about the ability of direct entry midwives to work in clinical roles outside of the Midwifery Scope of Practice.

Principles

Council believes there are certain principles that must be considered by each midwife wishing to hold a Midwifery Annual Practising Certificate. These are as follows:

- It is the responsibility of each midwife to decide whether she is working within the Midwifery Scope of Practice in a clinical role. If she is then she will need a Midwifery Practising Certificate.
- Midwives who registered through a direct entry midwifery programme must hold a Midwifery Practising Certificate if involved in clinical roles.
- For employed midwives, the decision as to whether the requirements of the job require a Midwifery Practising Certificate would need to be made in collaboration with the employer. If the job is clearly within the Midwifery Scope of Practice then a Midwifery Practising Certificate must be held.
- If midwives decide that their work is not within the Midwifery Scope of Practice then they do not require a Midwifery Practising Certificate but may require a Nursing Practising Certificate.
- If a Midwifery Practising Certificate is required then midwives will, over each three-year period, need to demonstrate their competence to practise at the level of Entry to the Register of Midwives, across all aspects of the Scope of Midwifery Practice. The details of how competence will be demonstrated are in the proposed Recertification Programme, which is

currently being finalised. The Proposed Recertification Programme is available on this website. Feedback on the consultation will be posted soon and the final recertification requirements will be released by mid-November.

Abortion services

Council has been made aware that some midwives work only in abortion services. In these services they are caring for women having first trimester abortions as well as late abortions in which the woman undergoes labour. Council is also aware that there are some highly trained nurses working in these areas who have developed considerable expertise in caring for women using these services.

Council believes that while it is of benefit to women to have midwifery care if they are undergoing a late termination, it is not necessary to be a midwife to do this work.

If midwives wish to work in this area and they wish to maintain their Midwifery Practising Certificate then they will need to find ways to meet the requirements of the Recertification Programme. This will mean that over each three-year period they will need to maintain practice across the full Scope of Midwifery Practice such that they can make a declaration as to their competence upon application for the Midwifery Practising Certificate. Employers who wish to employ midwives in these areas may be able to help the midwife access this experience. Examples of how this might be achieved are provided in the proposed Recertification Programme (accessible on this website) and these will be confirmed when the final programme is released in mid-November.

Family Planning Services

Council understands that some midwives work solely in Family Planning Services. While family planning is an aspect of the Midwifery Scope of Practice and midwives will have some knowledge of this area, it does not, on its own, meet the Midwifery Scope of Practice definition.

Midwives who work in this area and who wish to hold a Midwifery Practising Certificate will need to meet the Recertification Programme requirements. These will include working across the full Midwifery Scope of Practice over each three-year period such that they can make a declaration as to their competence to practise midwifery.

Midwives are reminded that they are only legally entitled to prescribe medications within the midwifery scope of practice. Therefore they may only prescribe for women who are pregnant, in labour and up to six weeks postpartum. Midwives working in family planning are not entitled to prescribe for women who are not pregnant or in the post partum period up to six weeks.

Neonatal Intensive Care

As above, any midwives working in neonatal intensive care who wish to maintain their Midwifery Practising Certificate will need to meet the requirements of the Recertification Programme by rotating through other areas of the maternity service in order to maintain their competence across the full Midwifery Scope of Practice. Employers should be able to assist with this rotation. There are also other ways in which midwives can maintain their competence across the scope and these are described in the Proposed Recertification Programme document.

Direct entry midwives

Employers may choose to employ direct entry midwives in any of the above areas. As is usual practice it is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that the midwife is properly orientated and supported into the role.

Direct entry midwives working in clinical roles must hold a Midwifery Practising Certificate and must therefore meet the requirements of the Recertification Programme. This means that direct entry midwives who are working in areas outside of the Midwifery Scope of Practice will need to find ways to maintain their competence across the scope. As already stated, the proposed Recertification Programme contains suggestions as to how this might be achieved. Employers will need to support these midwives to maintain their Midwifery Practising Certificate.

Midwives working in maternity units

Finally, it has come to our attention that there are some midwives with dual registration as nurses, and working in maternity units, who are contemplating not maintaining their Midwifery Practising Certificate and relying instead on their Nursing Practising Certificate. If these midwives are employed as midwives then they must hold a Midwifery Practising Certificate. Council does not believe there should ever be a case where a midwife was employed to work in a maternity area as a nurse.