



April 2005

Chairperson's Introduction

Kia ora and welcome to the first newsletter for 2005.

2005 will be another busy year. Our first annual practising certificate round is already well underway and our staff have dealt with a number of enquiries. Information about common enquiries is discussed later in the newsletter but midwives are reminded to read previous newsletters and to access the Midwifery Council website as many of your queries can be answered there and information is updated regularly.

One of the main developments for 2005 is the implementation of the Midwifery Council's Recertification Programme. A number of education providers have already put courses forward for approval and for allocation of points. As we work through the implementation we have needed to update the policy and a summary of these changes is included later in the newsletter.

This year we have undertaken to review the current pre-registration midwifery education programmes. As a first step we invite midwives to write to us with their thoughts on how we prepare midwives for registration in New Zealand. See the information later in this newsletter if you would like to participate.

We will shortly be conducting our first Competence Reviews and we have been working hard to clarify policy and process to ensure that these reviews are robust and transparent whilst at the same time supportive and educative. Competence Reviews are new mechanisms available to the Council under the HPCAA that may in the long run lead to a decrease in disciplinary processes. The aim of undertaking a Competence Review is to examine a midwife's practice more closely and, if there are issues identified, to help her improve her practice through provision of a competence programme and possibly through interim conditions on her scope of practice. At this stage the recommendations for Competence Reviews of specific midwives have come from the Health and Disability Commissioner, but Council is also empowered to carry out reviews if concerns are raised from other quarters.

The online register went live just prior to Christmas. Its purpose is to allow members of the public and employers to check whether a particular midwife is registered and has a practising certificate and whether there are any conditions on her/his practice. Council decided not to include addresses or registration numbers for security reasons. We are aware there is no consistency at present as to how cities and districts are described; please bear with us as our staff gradually tidy up the data using the information you provide in the 2005/06 practising certificate applications.

The Midwifery Council website is an important resource for us because it is a cost effective way of keeping in touch with the profession and informing the public of our activities. There is much information available on the website and it is updated regularly. We encourage you to visit it to find the latest information about Council's policies, processes and activities. We hope to have an interactive facility in the future through which you will be able to record your participation in the Recertification Programme. We welcome feedback about the website. We are particularly interested in any gaps or areas that need further development or explanation.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. It contains much important information. If you are aware of midwives who have not read the newsletter please encourage them to do so. Back issues are available on the website. If you know of midwives who have not received one please encourage them to contact us with their change of address details.

Sally Pairman
Chairperson

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Annual Recertification

Annual Practising Certificates.

Applications for annual practising certificates were due by 25 February to allow time for processing and sending out the new certificates before 31 March. At the time of writing this newsletter approximately one third of the expected number of midwives had returned their applications. If you have not sent yours in yet please do so or you risk not having a practising certificate by 1 April. Any midwives who have not received their certificates by 31 March should get in touch with our office in Wellington, preferably by email: nick@midwiferycouncil.org.nz or by telephone (04) 474 0707.

Council recognises that the new requirement to declare competence across the whole midwifery scope as part of an application for a practising certificate has meant some midwives have decided they no longer require a practising certificate for their work. Council has offered these midwives the opportunity to be classified as 'non practising active' where, for an annual fee of \$50 such midwives will remain on Council's active mailing list and will receive newsletters, consultation documents and any other information mailed out to midwives. It is important to Council and the profession that that we do not lose the input of these midwives just because they do not hold a practising certificate. To date some 90 midwives have taken up this opportunity.

This is an appropriate place to remind midwives that registration and certification are two different things. Once registered, you remain on the Register for life unless you ask to be removed, or you are removed as the result of a serious disciplinary matter. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider yourself a midwife even if you do not hold a practising certificate.

Scope of Practice queries

We continue to receive questions from midwives about their scope of practice. If you are a registered midwife working in a clinical capacity in a maternity unit

or in the community you must hold a Midwifery Practising Certificate.

Midwives, including direct entry midwives, may be employed to work in other areas such as neonatal intensive care units, gynaecology areas, family planning clinics and abortion services. Working in these areas will not, on their own, enable midwives to meet the requirement to work across the full Midwifery Scope of Practice. With the support of employers these midwives will need to work in antenatal, labour and birth and postnatal areas over each three-year period. Council does not define how much time each midwife might need to spend in these areas. Rather, it is a professional judgment of the midwife to decide how much time she needs to maintain her competence across the full scope of practice. Employed midwives will need to make this judgment in collaboration with their employer.

Council has updated its information in relation to the boundaries of the Scope of Practice in its document '**Information for midwives in relation to the Scope of Practice - further interpretation, March 2005**'. This document is available on the website. For the purpose of clarification Council has gazetted a minor amendment to the definition of the Scope of Practice. We have added a footnote to the effect that 'in relation to a preterm baby the Midwifery Council defines the six week postpartum period as commencing from the expected date of birth rather than the actual date of birth'. That is, Council recognises that the postpartum midwifery role for preterm babies may extend beyond six calendar weeks.

Council will not normally use conditions on practice to allow midwives to choose to maintain competence in only some parts of the Midwifery Scope of Practice.

Badges

Midwifery badges will no longer be issued. We realise that for some midwives their badge is an important

and cherished symbol, but they now have no legal significance and unfortunately if they are lost we cannot replace them. The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act under which we operate is aimed at protecting the health and safety of the public. As part of that, midwives need to be able to show that they are registered, that they hold a current practising certificate and whether there are any conditions on their practice. The new practising certificate card provides all that information. We hope you agree with us that it is also attractive. Midwives and employers are reminded that both sides of this card must be photocopied if the photocopy is being used as evidence of holding an APC.

Fees

Council is well aware that the increase in the fee for an Annual Practising Certificate from last year (under the Nursing Council) is significant. However, as was signalled in all newsletters in 2004, Council had no option but to set the fee at this level. As a new authority and with no establishment grant, the APC fee represents our main source of income. This is compounded by the relatively small workforce of midwives compared with nurses and the need to budget for all the activities Council is required to undertake by the HPCAA. In addition to our normal activities we needed to budget for potential midwifery cases that may come before the Professional Conduct Committee, the Competence Review Panel and Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal. The estimated costs involved in Council performing its statutory obligations of regulation, education, discipline and competence were carefully calculated and fees set accordingly.

Employers either contribute to or pay the fee for their employees. Midwives in self-employed practice can claim GST and the APC fee can be claimed as part of your business expenses.

New Registration Numbers

In the December newsletter we explained that because we have a new Register (separate from the Nursing Council Register) all midwives now have a new registration number. We also discussed the government initiative to provide every health practitioner with a unique identifying number (the Health Practitioner Index or HPI). We had hoped that midwives could be issued with HPI numbers before the invoices for 2005/06 annual practising certificates were sent out so that the HPI numbers could be used as registration numbers, thereby avoiding another change of registration numbers in the future. Unfortunately technical issues prevailed and midwives will now face another change of number in the future.

Claims for payment by LMCs.

We know that some midwives have experienced difficulties getting prompt payments from HealthPAC. Whereas we had been assured that HealthPAC would be ready to process payments from midwives using their new registration numbers from 1 April 2005. They have very recently told us that for various technical reasons they will not be ready to accommodate the new numbers until 2006. The difficulty is with the format and the length of numbers. To ensure there is no interruption to your claiming while HealthPAC aligns its systems midwives are asked to do two things:

- the first part of your registration number must be altered by removing the leading 1 (one) and the – (hyphen); for example 15-12345 should be recorded on the claim form as 512345.
- if claim forms are submitted on your behalf by an organisation or provider, please ensure they are aware of this requirement which will apply until further notice.

Those midwives already recorded on HealthPAC's system should have received a letter from HealthPAC. If you have any queries about what is required please contact Simon Hill (HealthPAC) 04 381 5368 or or Nick Bennie (Midwifery Council) 04 474 0707 or email: nick@midwiferycouncil.org.nz.

Periodically our staff receive phone calls from doctors or pharmacists seeking a particular midwife's registration number because she has not recorded it on the claim form. Please be aware that it is Council's policy not make midwives' registration numbers public. Our staff do not give out numbers to anyone, including pharmacists and doctors. Please make sure you record your registration number on your claim form in the way described above to minimise delay in payment.

Recertification Programme

The Recertification Programme was approved in December 2004. We have updated this policy in March 2005 and a revised policy document titled **Recertification Programme: Competence-based Practising Certificates for Midwives, updated 6 March 2005**, is now on the website.

A summary of changes follows:

- There are no longer points attached to the compulsory continuing education component. Points remain for elective continuing education (40) and professional activities (60).
- Only approved education providers can offer the compulsory continuing education component, ie. Technical Skills Workshops, Breastfeeding Workshop, CPR Update, Neonatal Resuscitation Update.
- Council has set requirements for the Technical Skills Workshops and Breastfeeding Workshops and these courses will have to be submitted to Council for approval before an approved provider can offer them.
- Approved education providers are DHBs, NZCOM, and Polytechnic and University Schools of Midwifery. Any other education providers who wish to be 'approved' to provide the compulsory education components will need to apply and meet the Midwifery Council's criteria for approval.

- Elective education courses need to be submitted to the Midwifery Council for approval and for the allocation of points according to criteria and processes set by the Midwifery Council. The providers of elective education courses no longer need to be 'approved' by the Council.
- The three-year period (or one year period for LMC midwives and the variable timeframes for some others) within which midwives must undertake Midwifery Standards Review commences from the date of their first APC issued by the Midwifery Council.
- Upon each annual application for an APC midwives will need to provide a summary of their participation in the Recertification Programme. This summary will relate to the three years prior to the APC application. Council recognises that most midwives will be able to report on only one or two years of activity until their APC application in 2008.

Information for education providers about these criteria and processes is available on the website in the Councils updated document '**Information for Education Providers' (revised March 2005)**.

A list of approved courses and providers is posted on the website and will be updated regularly.

We are now working hard to get the Recertification Programme up and running. This involves:

- approving education providers and courses to facilitate midwives meeting the continuing education requirements;
- establishing the processes for midwives to provide evidence, and for Council to record for each midwife, her practice across the scope, her attendance at compulsory education courses, and points gained for elective education and professional activities;
- establishing the process for checking that in each three year cycle each midwife has met all the requirements to demonstrate ongoing competence;
- liaising with NZCOM to ensure that their Midwifery Standards Review process is in place and working effectively;
- establishing a formal audit process for the standards review component of the Recertification Programme;
- establishing a formal audit process for individual midwives' compliance with the programme (to take effect from 2006).

Midwifery Standards Review

Midwives are reminded of the need to book for a review. The Recertification Programme document outlines the requirements for review for different categories of midwives. In most cases the DHBs will meet the costs of review for employed midwives. However, it is up to individual midwives to ensure that they have a review booked by contacting their manager or by contacting the NZCOM National Office on or by phone 03 3772732. Once you make contact with NZCOM you will be sent an invoice for payment for the review. When this is paid you will be notified of the date, time and venue for review and the names of your reviewers. To guarantee a review in 2005 payment must be received by NZCOM by the beginning of May 2005.

Have you changed your address?

Our staff report that the mail out of Annual Practising Certificate renewals led to quite a deluge of midwives realising they had not received their forms and requesting a new set of forms to be sent to a new address. Please let us know promptly when you change your residential, postal and/or work address. It is not sufficient to advise the Nursing Council or NZNO and assume the information gets passed around. It does not. It is your legal obligation to advise us of changes to your residential, postal and work address but apart from that we want to know that when we send out newsletters or other information it gets to you.

You can let us know about any change by:

- phone: (04) 474 0707 or (04) 474 0740
- email: or info@midwiferycouncil.org.nz

Pre-registration midwifery education review

As mentioned in our December newsletter, Council is undertaking a review of the current criteria for pre-registration midwifery programmes through 2005, with the aim of developing stronger national standards for these programmes and possibly a national curriculum.

The second day of the Forum last November saw the commencement of that process and we were very pleased with the depth of feedback from practitioners, midwifery educators and managers. The consensus was that we all have an important role to play in ensuring our new graduates have the knowledge, skills and attitudes that we expect of members of our profession. Therefore this review is of interest to us all and we encourage you to participate.

We have been obliged to revise our time frame a little and our plan now is as follows:

- This April newsletter asks you to send us your comments by May 20th about pre-registration midwifery education (see below)
- In March the five Midwifery Schools were asked to undertake a self-review of their programmes by May 6th;
- The information gathered through these processes will be collated in preparation for a meeting between educators, practitioners, managers and Council on 1st June;
- Through June and early July we will prepare and widely circulate a Discussion Document with feedback sought and collated in September;
- Policy will be developed by November.

Please make use of the opportunity to have your say about midwifery education. If you do not wish to respond to the questions outlined below you will have another opportunity for input when we distribute the formal Discussion Document later in the year.

As a start we invite you to write to us with your comments on the following:

1. What do you think is working well in our pre-registration midwifery education programmes and why do you say this?
2. What do you think could be improved in our pre-registration midwifery education programmes and why do you say this?
3. At present midwifery students are required to facilitate a minimum of 30 births. Do you think this number is sufficient? If not, what should it be and why do you say that?
4. Are there any other skills that you think should have minimum numbers attached to them? If so, what are these and how many should there be?
5. How do you think we should measure/assess students for registration against the Competencies for Entry to the register of Midwives?
6. How much clinical experience do you think student midwives should have and where should this be undertaken?
7. What ideas do you have as to how we can provide more clinical experience for students?
8. What kind of support do you think new graduates need as they begin practice and why do you say this?
9. What are the three most important areas you think should be considered in the review of our pre-registration midwifery education programmes?

Please send this information to:

Midwifery Council
PO Box 10-140, Wellington, or by email to
By 20 May 2005

Don't forget to tell us your name, contact details and place of work when you send us this information.

Other Policy Development

Return to Practice programmes

We have developed initial policy in relation to “Return to Practice” programmes, being programmes to be undertaken by midwives who have not held a midwifery practising certificate and/or who have not practised midwifery for three years immediately prior to them applying for an APC.

In determining the requirements, Council has distinguished between:

- Midwives who practised midwifery for more than two years before having a break of between three and eight years. These midwives will undertake a self-assessment and develop Personal Learning Plans to be approved by Council.
- Midwives who practised for less than two years before having a break of more than three years. Such midwives will be directed to an approved education provider or DHB for assistance with their individual assessments and development of Personal Learning Plans.
- Midwives who have not practised for more than eight complete years will also be directed to an approved education provider or DHB for assessment but it is recognised that such midwives may need to undertake a shortened Bachelor of Midwifery programme with recognition of prior learning.

The Return to Practice policy which sets out the requirements in more detail is available on our website . We are working on development of the processes for administering these programmes.

Competence Reviews

The purpose of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act is to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing mechanisms to ensure that health practitioners are competent and fit to practise their professions. When concerns are raised

about a midwife’s competence the Council is compelled to make inquiries into that midwife’s competence and consider whether a review of competence is necessary, unless it becomes clear that the information received is frivolous or vexatious. Concerns may be raised by the Health and Disability Commissioner, other midwives, other health practitioners, employers or the Council’s own Professional Conduct Committee. Council also has the discretion to review a midwife’s practice at any time whether or not there is explicit cause for concern.

Council is developing policy and practical guidelines for these important functions and we are grateful for the guidance of those of our Council members who have a good deal of experience in this area. We sought nominations and are in the process of appointing suitable midwives to a Pool from which each Competence Review Panel will be appointed as and when required.

Criteria for appointment to the Pool are:

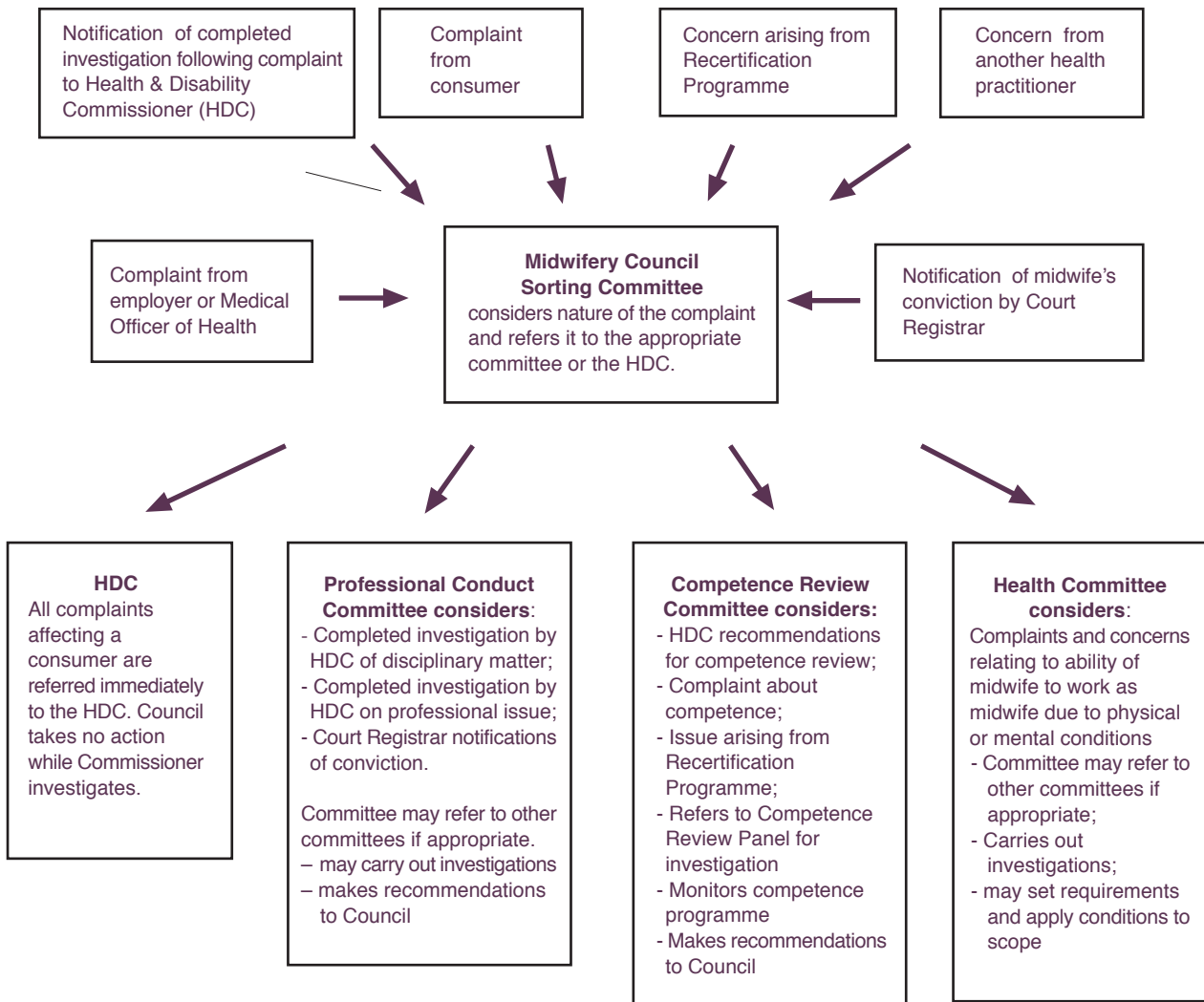
- Registration in New Zealand as a midwife
- Holder of a current midwifery practising certificate with no conditions on scope
- Current experience in midwifery
- Experience in midwifery
- Clinical competence
- Considered to be of good reputation in the midwifery profession
- Good verbal and written and interpersonal skills
- Ability to preserve confidentiality of the information that comes to knowledge in the course of carrying out the Review
- Has never been the subject of an adverse finding through any professional disciplinary body.
- Has undertaken NZCOM Midwifery Standards Review within the previous three years.

Competence Reviews will be an important part of raising the overall standard of the profession and assuring the public of a high standard of midwifery care. We recognise that having your practice reviewed may be stressful but Competence Reviews are not disciplinary in nature. Council’s intent is that they will be carried out in a constructive, collegial and educative way and focus on assisting the midwife to improve her standard of practice.

Health Issues

Like competence concerns the HPCAA requires the Midwifery Council to investigate if any concerns are raised about a midwife’s ability to practise because of a possible mental or physical condition. When there is a health related matter to investigate it will be dealt with by Council’s Health Committee. If a health matter does exist which is impacting on a midwife’s ability to practise safely or at the required level of competence, the Health Committee can impose conditions on a midwife’s practice in order to protect the public until she is well again. These processes will be carried out in as supportive way as possible. The diagram on the next page shows how the competence and health processes fit together.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS



Changed your name?

If you change your name and want it changed on the Register please let us know. We do require evidence such as a copy of your marriage certificate or birth certificate (depending on which way you are changing), deed poll or statutory declaration. Our mailing address is PO Box 10 140, Wellington.

Finally . . .

We wish you well for the coming year. It will be a period of transition as we all begin to experience the implications of the Recertification Programme and other Council policies. Please bear with us as we develop our processes. We welcome feedback and suggestions.

We encourage you to share your ideas about midwifery education. The way in which we prepare midwives for registration in New Zealand is of vital importance to the standard of care available to mothers, babies and families. We all have a part to play in ensuring we prepare high quality graduates, as this is not the sole responsibility of education providers or of midwives in clinical practice. We look forward to your contribution to this discussion.

Remember to use your Midwifery Council Registration Number on all documents from 1 April 2005