THE STATUTORY SUPERVISION OF MIDWIVES

Guideline produced by: West of Scotland Supervisors of Midwives
Guideline Development Group

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The supervision of midwives and midwifery practice is a statutory responsibility established in the UK in the first Midwives Act of 1902 and in Scotland the Midwives Act of 1915. Current legislation regulating this function is contained in The Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001, article 43(1) and (2) and in the Midwives rules and standards (NMC 2004). The organisation responsible for the Local Supervising Authority (LSA) function in Scotland is designated in the Nursing and Midwifery Order (2001) as NHS Boards.

STATUTORY DUTIES OF LOCAL SUPERVISING AUTHORITIES

The statutory functions of the LSA are detailed in Rules 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of the NMC Midwives rules and standards. The responsibility of LSA is to ensure that statutory supervision of midwives and midwifery practice is exercised in accordance with this secondary legislation, for all midwives practising within its geographical boundary. In the West of Scotland the LSA Midwifery Officer provides support to all Supervisors and midwives within the area, this guidance forms part of that framework.

WEST OF SCOTLAND LSAs PHILOSOPHY OF SUPERVISION OF MIDWIVES

The philosophy of statutory supervision is to ensure that all midwives are confident and clinically competent to carry out the role, thereby ensuring protection of the public. Supervisors promote excellence in midwifery practice, are the advocates of high standards of care for mothers and babies and provide support and guidance to every practising midwife. The statutory function should be viewed as a valuable resource for midwives, their employers, for student midwives and for all women who use maternity services.

As a modern regulatory system, supervision upholds protection of the public by supporting midwives to practise with confidence, thus preventing poor practice. Supervisors must ensure that the clinical competence of midwives is maintained, making reference at all times to the NMC ‘Midwives rules and standards’ (2004) and NMC ‘The Code - Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives’ (2008).

All Supervisors of Midwives must be able to demonstrate that, in order to carry out the above, they meet the competencies for a Supervisor of Midwives; as stated in the NMC Standards for the preparation and practice of supervisors of midwives (NMC 2006).
References

