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SCOPE OF MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

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Guideline Development Group

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SCOPE OF MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

Introduction

There are no limits placed by legislation, upon the activities that can be undertaken by a midwife, provided that she has the skill, training and competence.

The scope of midwifery practice is encompassed in the definition and activities of the midwife contained in the NMC (2004) Midwives rules and standards - page 36.

Supervisors of Midwives must empower midwives to be flexible and to continually develop evidence based practice in a health care environment that is constantly changing.

Every midwife is accountable for her own practice and it is individual professional judgement that can provide innovative solutions to meeting the needs of mothers, babies and families. The range of responsibilities of midwives should be related to their individual professional experience, continuing education, skills and current sphere of practice.

The midwife must:-

- Ensure that the needs of mothers, babies and families are paramount
- Keep up to date, maintain and develop knowledge, skills and competence
- Recognise personal limitations of professional skills, competence and knowledge and take remedial action
- Ensure that existing midwifery care is not compromised by new developments and responsibilities
- Acknowledge personal and professional accountability
- Avoid inappropriate delegation



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Education for Professional Development

Some developments in midwifery care can become an integral part of the role of the midwife whilst other developments in midwifery and obstetric practice may also require development of new skills, but these skills do not necessarily become an integral part of the role of all midwives (NMC 2004 Midwives rules and standards – page 19).

It is fundamental in ensuring professional accountability, that the individual midwife takes responsibility for identifying and planning how to meet her own educational needs.

Developing Competence and Confidence

Supervisors are well placed to help midwives identify any new skills, education or preparation necessary to take on new roles, particularly when changes are introduced to professional practice. Midwives may need to consider developing their practice and the Supervisor can help the individual midwife to identify what is appropriate. Any development must be for the benefit of the mothers, babies and families and the midwife should satisfy the Supervisor that:-

- The primary focus of practice is the mother and baby
- She feels confident and competent in her professional and personal abilities within that practice
- Existing care will not be compromised or fragmented
- Personal and professional accountability are acknowledged

Supervisors of Midwives have a responsibility to be aware of advances in midwifery practice and must ensure that appropriate policies and training are in place to support these developments. Discussion must take place with individual midwives regarding their preparation and educational needs.



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Conclusion

All practising midwives hold a position of responsibility and trust and are personally and professionally accountable for any actions or omissions. Competencies should be constantly evaluated and redefined throughout a midwife's career as practice takes place in a context of continuing change and development.

Developments in practice should be sensitive, relevant and responsive to the individual requirements of mothers, babies and families and have the capacity to be adjusted where and when appropriate to changing circumstances.

References

NMC (2004) *Midwives rules and standards*. NMC, London.

NMC (2008) *The Code – Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives*. NMC, London.