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1. Research Poster «Midwifery Services»

Midwifery services

Midwifery is a global profession. Midwifery services provide care, support, and education to women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period. Midwives are trained professionals who focus on the health and wellbeing of both mother and baby, promoting safe deliveries and providing guidance on breastfeeding, nutrition, and maternal mental health and midwives make a vital contribution to their survival, health and wellbeing across the world (Nursing and midwifery council 18 November 2019).

BRIEF HISTORY

Midwifery is one of the oldest healthcare professions, with roots tracing back thousands of years. Historically, midwives were community-based women with practical experience in childbirth. Archaeological records from ancient Egypt and Greece mention midwives assisting women during labour, often guided by experience and traditional knowledge rather than formal education (UNFPA, 2023).



During the Middle Ages, midwives were respected figures in local communities, though their role was later challenged by the rise of male-dominated medicine in the 17th and 18th centuries. The shift from home births to hospital deliveries began in the 19th century, particularly with advances in antiseptic techniques and obstetric science (Royal College of Midwives [RCM], 2023).



- **1800s:** Formal training programmes for midwives began in Europe, aiming to standardise practices and reduce maternal mortality.
- **1900s:** Midwifery became regulated by national health authorities, ensuring professional standards and safety.
- **1948:** With the creation of the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK, midwifery was integrated into the national healthcare system.
- **Today:** Emphasis is on evidence-based care, community support, and digital resources for maternal health.

CURRENT FUNCTIONING

Midwifery services today focus on providing holistic, woman-centred care. Key functions include:

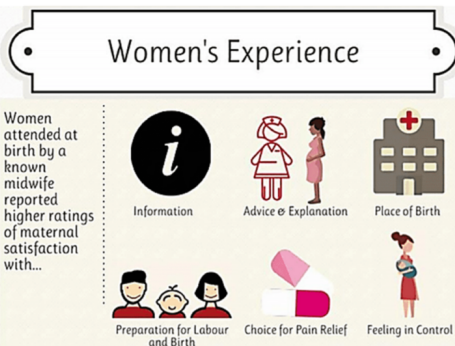
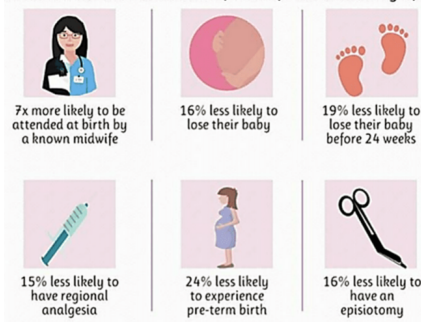
- **Antenatal care:** Monitoring mother and baby’s health, providing education, and preparing for childbirth.
- **Labour and birth support:** Assisting women during labour, ensuring safe delivery, and managing complications.
- **Postnatal care:** Supporting recovery, breastfeeding, and newborn care.
- **Collaboration:** Working with obstetricians, nurses, and paediatricians for high-risk pregnancies.

Midwifery in Numbers:

- Around 700,000 babies are born in the UK each year.
- Midwives provide the majority of care for low-risk pregnancies.
- Home births account for approximately 2–3% of all deliveries in the UK

Services are available in hospitals, community clinics, and through home visits. Digital platforms and telehealth are increasingly used for appointments, educational resources, and support

Women who received models of midwife-led continuity of care



CHALLENGE	DESCRIPTION
Staff Shortage	High workloads, long shifts, and burnout contribute to staff leaving the profession: “Report after report have made a direct connection between staffing levels and safety, the midwife shortage is worsening” (Royal College of Midwives [RCM], 2023). For example, “Almost nine in ten (88 %) had worked additional unpaid hours. England faces a shortfall of around 2,500 full-time midwives” (RCM, June 2024).
Limited Funding & Unequal Access	A survey revealed that more than 80 % of student midwives due to qualify this year were “not confident they will secure a job” despite the shortage of midwives (Benn, 2025). In addition, “Recruitment and retention of staff remains a chronic issue for maternity services and presents a major national concern”

(Care Quality Commission [CQC], 2024).

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2. Report: The Origins and Structure of the National Health Service (NHS)

2.1 Introduction

The National Health Service (NHS) is the United Kingdom's public health service. It provides free medical help to people who use it. The NHS was founded in 1948 and forever altered British life. Prior to the NHS many people couldn't afford to visit a doctor or go to a hospital. Private medical care was only available to the rich. Poor families often had no help at all. After the Second World War, people wanted a fairer society where everyone could get health care. The central idea of the NHS was simple: that every person should get medical help when they need it, not only those with money. The NHS became a symbol of equality and care for all.

2.2 The Beginning of the NHS

Prior to 1948, health care in Britain wasn't structured for everyone. Rich people financed private doctors, and the poor had to depend on charity or local councils. There were significant variations in the quality of care based on socioeconomic status (Greengross et al., 1999). The government coordinated medical assistance for soldiers and workers during the Second World War. This demonstrated that a national health system would work for everyone (The National Archives, 2023). Then in 1942 a man named Sir William Beveridge wrote an important report called Social Insurance and Allied Services. He stressed the importance of the government doing exactly this and he referred to it as five main problems in society: poverty, disease, ignorance, bad housing and unemployment (Beveridge, 1942). He wanted the government to care for people "from the cradle to the grave" in other words to their entire lives. After the war, the Labour Party won the 1945 election. The new health minister, Aneurin Bevan, had a vision to set up a national health service. Bevan said health care should be a human right, not a purchase. The NHS should, according to him, be "universal, free at the point of use, and based on need, not income" (Greengross et al., 1999). Doctors and local officials didn't agree with Bevan's scheme for fear of losing money or power. But Bevan didn't stop and,

on 5 July 1948, the NHS began (The National Archives, 2023). The basic rules were three central – and fundamental – ones on which our NHS was built:

1. It must meet the needs of everyone.
2. It must be free when people use it.
3. It must be based on need, not ability to pay.

These ideas laid the groundwork for the NHS and continue to serve the service (The National Archives, 2023).

2.3 The NHS Today

Today, the NHS is one of the most important parts of life in the United Kingdom. It helps millions of people every day and provides many services — from emergency care to vaccinations and surgery (UK Parliament, 2024).

However, the NHS is not exactly the same everywhere in the UK. There are four separate systems: NHS England, NHS Scotland, NHS Wales, and Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. Each one is managed separately, but they all follow the same principles and values (UK Parliament, 2024). In England, NHS England is responsible for planning health services and giving money to local groups called Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). These boards decide what services their area needs — for example, hospitals, general practitioners (GPs), or community clinics (The King's Fund, 2024).

Hospitals and clinics are managed by NHS Trusts, which provide care to local people. Primary care, such as GPs, dentists, and pharmacists, also works under the NHS system. Sometimes private companies help with specific services, like blood tests or eye checks (The King's Fund, 2024).

The NHS is mainly paid for by taxes. The government collects money from the public and then gives it to NHS England. This allows everyone to get medical care without paying directly at the time of treatment (UK Parliament, 2024). This system makes health care fairer, because it depends on need, not on wealth. People who are rich and poor receive the same level of medical care when they are sick (The National Archives, 2023).

2.4 Challenges of the NHS

Now the NHS is confronted with many issues. One big issue is the population is getting older. The longer that people live, the more long-term illnesses they develop, such as heart disease, diabetes, and arthritis. So hospitals and clinics are busier than they used to be (The King's Fund, 2024). Another issue is a shortage of staff. Doctors and nurses, among other workers, quit because they are tired or stressed and sometimes because of the pay. The King's Fund (2024) reports there are tens of thousands of staff vacancies within the NHS. That increases wait times for patients and piles on some pressure on hospitals. Money is also a big issue. Taxes pay the NHS, but every year the cost of new medicines, medical technologies, and equipment rises. The government finds itself choosing how much to spend on the NHS, and not always with the necessary funds (UK Parliament, 2024). That is another big challenge, linking health care and social care. Many patients, particularly elderly patients, require medical treatment and assistance at home. Local councils and the hospitals don't always collaborate well. As a result, some patients remain in hospital longer than necessary, with home care not yet prepared for them (Greengross et al., 1999). New technology should be used by the NHS, investment should be made in prevention and hospitals and the social care sector should collaborate to deliver better care (The King's Fund, 2024).

The NHS Long Term Plan focuses on driving healthier lifestyles, early diagnosis, and improved mental health services to tackle pressure on hospitals (UK Parliament, 2024). However it is, despite all these problems, the NHS remains most respected. To many British, it is a sign of equality and fairness. Surveys reveal that the public still holds fast to the original idea — that health care should be free and in everyone's hands at all times (The National Archives, 2023).

2.5 Conclusion

The National Health Service was established to provide fairness to all within health care free of charge. It came about after the war and sought to provide people with the right to see a doctor and get treatment regardless of their income level. The NHS has saved many lives and improved health across the UK, and has been running since 1948. There are challenges, including a shortage of staff, long waits, and an ageing population. Yet, despite these issues, the NHS remains one of the most important aspects of life in Britain. It remains a symbol of fairness, kindness, and respect to all who need care.

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