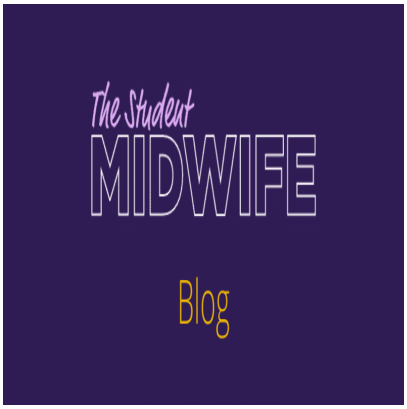

Description

The Midwife Beside You

Jess Weymouth (She/her) – Student Midwife



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Your training is not just built on lectures or OSCEs. It is built on the midwife who stands beside you.

You can study hard, memorise guidelines, and ace the assignments. But none of that prepares you for what happens when the shift begins and you are paired with someone new. It is in those moments, the shared glances, the unspoken cues, the quiet conversations between contractions, that you begin to understand what kind of midwife you are becoming.

I have been blessed in my training to work alongside some truly incredible supervisors. Midwives who have not only shared their skills but offered their time, patience, and wisdom. True role models to the profession. They have supported me when I doubted myself, celebrated the small wins, and helped me reflect when things felt overwhelming. Some of them have become the internal voice I hear during difficult decisions. They are the quiet strength behind many of my confident moments.

I have learned from newly qualified midwives too. Those still fresh with passion, asking big questions and never afraid to spark discussion. Together we have debated the ethics of induction, the realities of abortion care, and what it truly

means to practise midwifery in a system that sometimes feels like it is in conflict with itself. Those conversations have stayed with me, shaping how I think and how I show up. Learning is not just top-down. It flows in every direction when the environment is right.

And then there are the midwives who have been in the profession for decades. The ones who have witnessed the full stretch of the maternity continuum. The ones who carry stories in their eyes and still speak with power and conviction. I remember one supervisor who had been practising for over twenty years. Every time I brought her a new study or piece of research, her face lit up. She loved learning. She loved watching students grow. She loved supporting women to step into their power.



When she worked with women who chose to birth outside of guidance, women with layered histories of trauma, or simply those who did not feel at home in the system. She never tried to talk them out of their decisions. She offered evidence, shared risks and benefits clearly, and then stood beside them but not in judgement, but in unwavering respect. Her advocacy was not loud, but it was fierce. Her empathy filled the room. Watching her practise reminded me that midwifery is about partnership, not control. She did not just inform women. She honoured them.

I have taken something from each of these midwives. Their wisdom. Their presence. Their ways of speaking and listening. Their courage. I carry those pieces into my own practice now. I may not be them, but I am shaped by them.

When you are placed with someone who is passionate, evidence-informed, and kind, it changes everything. They do not just teach. They guide, they invite, and they challenge you in the right ways. They talk you through things not because they have to, but because they care that you understand. They treat you like a future colleague, not just another student to carry around. And slowly, you begin to trust yourself. Not because you know everything, but because you are learning in a space where it is safe to not know.

These midwives stay with you. Their phrases echo in your head during night shifts. Their calmness becomes your anchor when a labour suddenly spirals. The way they comforted a woman who was scared. The way they stood their ground during a difficult handover. All of that becomes part of how you practise. They shape you, and they may never realise just how much.

But not every placement feels like that.

Sometimes you are paired with someone who has lost their spark. Maybe they were never supported themselves. Maybe the system has worn them thin. Maybe they are simply surviving. In those moments, it is hard not to feel visible. They might not mean to, but their energy tells you that you are in the way. They do not explain. They do not involve. They do not encourage. You are left trailing behind, unsure of your place, too afraid to speak in case you annoy them.

And when that happens, it begins to wear on you. You start to question yourself. You stop offering to try. Your learning pauses. Not because you are not willing, but because the space does not welcome it.

Midwives shape students, whether they intend to or not. Their actions, tone and attitude tell you what this profession could be, or what it might become if you stop caring. They set the culture. They model what is normal. And when that

model is rushed, dismissive, or outdated, it takes real courage to unlearn it.

That is why teaching matters. That is why being a supervisor is more than ticking a box. A midwife who truly values students cultivates practitioners who are confident, thoughtful and compassionate. But a midwife who shuts down, who silences, who dismisses, can pass down something else entirely. Not just poor habits, but quiet messages that say you do not belong here.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council reminds us, “Maintain the knowledge and skills you need for safe and effective practice”.[1] That includes the knowledge passed between generations of midwives, not only through courses and study days, but in everyday interactions on shift, with the students who are learning what kind of midwife they will become.

To the students reading this, you are allowed to learn from the good and the bad. You are allowed to see something and think, that is not how I want to practise. You are allowed to want better and still be kind in how you seek it.

And to the midwives who support us, you do not have to be perfect. Just present. Just open. Just kind.

We are watching, always. Not to catch you out, but to learn how to stand in your shoes.

We are taking it all in.

Every gesture.

Every handover.

Every birth.

You might forget the shift, but we will remember it for years.

And one day, we will be the ones passing it on.

Reference

1. Nursing & Midwifery Council (2018) The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates. Available at: https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/nmc-publications/nmc-code.pdf

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