

Description

What to expect – the first year as a newly qualified midwife

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As a student midwife, I dreamed of the day I would be wearing my ‘blues’, confidently walking down the hospital hallways as a fully qualified midwife, Nursing and Midwifery Council pin in hand, ready to take on the world.

The day I actually received my pin, I didn’t tell a soul. It took me a full 3 days to let the labour ward manager know I was finally ready to go out on my own as an autonomous practitioner.

I equated receiving my NMC pin to the moment my first-born was placed into my arms. I had read all the pregnancy

books out there, I KNEW pregnancy, but I didn't have the first clue how to look after a baby! Equally as a student midwife, I knew everything there was to know about being a student, but when it came to being a qualified midwife, I was stumped. Luckily, in both instances, I wasn't alone.

The NMC recommends a period of preceptorship for all newly qualified midwives in order to support them in their transition from student to autonomous practitioner (NMC, 2008). In my case, I was supernumerary for a few weeks with my preceptor while I found my feet and after that I would meet up with her intermittently to discuss my progress, any concerns I had or to identify gaps in my training.

I am also lucky enough to work in a hospital that has a dedicated specialist midwife who works alongside post registration midwives and is on call every day if someone needs supervision during suturing, has concerns regarding a CTG, or would like to do some in-house training. Knowing I was not alone really helped me in my transition from student to autonomous practitioner as much as knowing as a new mum that you have on going support when you go home.

While it is not mandatory to provide a preceptorship programme to newly qualified midwives, it is a recommendation from the NMC that you have a period of preceptorship and protected time with a preceptor (NMC, 2006). Prior to accepting a post, you can ask what the maternity service offers to support you, and how they facilitate on going learning to newly qualified staff.

Becoming a fully-fledged midwife can be daunting, but it is important to remember that every midwife you work with has stood in your shoes and you are not expected to be super midwife on your first day! Take each day as it comes and ask for help when you need it. And give yourself a pat on the back, you have achieved your dream and can now call yourself a midwife!



Tips for surviving your first year:

1.

Find your tribe:

You are not alone. Speak to other midwives, make friends, and share your concerns. Everyone has felt how you feel and it helps to debrief and talk it out.

2. Reflect, reflect, reflect:

Don’t push an experience to one side and forget about it, learn from it. Speak to a colleague, manager or supervisor of midwives, write it down and think about what you could have done differently or what you did well. Keep your reflections for revalidation.

3. Make time for yourself:

It’s so easy to let your job take over your life. As midwives, it’s very hard to leave work at the door when you finish a shift. But it is very important to look after yourself and make time for your friends and family. Keep up your hobbies and out of work activities and spend time with loved ones. And keep the placenta talk to a minimum at the dinner table… Not everyone is as excited as you at the thought of a succenturiate lobe!

4. **Get some vitamin D:**

Working shifts sometimes means you don’t see the outside world for days on end but it’s so important to get outside during the day, even for 30 minutes to get fresh air.

5. **Stay organised:**

When you qualify, you are expected to attend mandatory training, study days, keep on top of K2 and get to grips with your hospital policies. Keep a note of all mandatory training and when it is due to be renewed and keep a record of all training certificates and study days you have attended. It will help you with revalidation too!

6. **Don’t forget your roots:**

It is very easy to fall victim to cultural practices when you qualify. Remember, you are more up to date on your evidence-based knowledge than many of the midwives working alongside you. The NMC expects us to follow up to date evidence in our practice, regardless of what hospital culture dictates. Stick to your guns (and the evidence!).

7. **Enjoy it!**

You have worked so hard to be where you are today, be proud of yourself! Think back to why you wanted to be a midwife and remind yourself of the passion that drove you to get to the finish line. Read your UCAS personal statement or think back to positive experiences you had as a student. Think about the lives you have had a positive impact on.

Don’t forget you can follow the #Tips4NewMidwives on Twitter!

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