Description

World-Class Maternity Workers Celebrated at Royal College of Midwives Awards

The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) has celebrated the dedication, skill and compassion of midwives, maternity support workers and students from across the UK at this year's RCM Awards.

The prestigious RCM Awards are held annually and honour outstanding individuals in maternity care who have made a positive impact on women, babies and their families, showcasing world-class midwifery standards.

Winners were announced at a special ceremony held in London on Friday 6 February 2026. Among the winners included a student midwife who joined the profession after losing her baby and has gone on to transform bereavement care, a midwife who helped turn round a midwifery course which was on the brink of regulation withdrawal and a vaccination team which increased pregnancy vaccines by 700%.

Speaking at the event, RCM Chief Executive Gill Walton said: *"The RCM Awards is an important moment for us to come together, to share our achievements and celebrate them. And there is so much to celebrate. Looking at the award entries, once again, I was delighted to see the brilliant work out there. creativity, the commitment, the compassion, it's all there. We always have lots of applications for the awards, so making it onto the shortlist is a massive achievement.*

"But the real winners are the women and babies. They win when we get to deliver great care. And I know it isn't just the things we see in these award entries, but what midwives and maternity support workers do every day."



The full list of winners are:

Midwifery Leadership
Alexandra Birch – Staffordshire University

Alexandra led a remarkable turnaround of Staffordshire University's midwifery programme after it was placed at serious risk of losing NMC approval. Within just six months, she addressed all regulatory concerns, rebuilt confidence in the course, and secured its future for current and prospective student midwives. She also introduced practical innovations – including QR codes giving students instant access to key information – which have since been shared internationally at the European Midwives Association conference.

Excellence in Public Health
Dorset Perinatal Vaccinations – University Hospitals Dorset

The Dorset Perinatal Vaccinations team dramatically increased vaccine uptake among pregnant women by redesigning how and where vaccines are delivered. Using local data, they placed clinics in the most accessible locations and aligned appointments with routine scans. As a result, more than 4,400 vaccines were delivered between September 2024 and April 2025 – compared with fewer than 500 during the same period the previous year.

Educator of the Year
The Memory Milk Gift Initiative – Countess of Chester NHS Foundation Trust supported by Forget Me Not Children's Hospice

The Memory Milk education programme equips midwives and healthcare professionals to support bereaved parents with compassionate, trauma-informed lactation care following baby loss. Every element of the programme was co-developed with bereaved parents. Since its launch, NHS trusts across the UK have adopted new lactation-after-loss protocols and training packages inspired by the work.

Excellence in Research
Emily Bates, Saskia Osterloff, Emily Sowinski – University of East Anglia

This research team investigated the impact of the 40 Birth Requirements target for student midwives at a time when vaginal birth rates are declining nationally. Their work explored whether the target remains realistic and achievable, helping inform future approaches to midwifery education and clinical training.

Outstanding Contribution to Perinatal Mental Health
Josephine Lane – Health and Care Jersey

Josephine has transformed perinatal mental health care within her organisation, developing specialist support for women and families during pregnancy and after birth. Her work has strengthened pathways, improved access to care, and ensured mental health is treated as a core part of maternity services.

Outstanding Contribution to Pregnancy Loss and Bereavement Care
Lauren Caulfield – University of Manchester

Midwifery student Lauren believes bereavement care should be embedded throughout midwifery education, not treated as a niche specialism. Working closely with baby loss charity Sands, she helped co-design a digital bereavement clinical placement that has already engaged more than 100 students, improving confidence and compassion in supporting grieving families.

Innovation in Maternity Care
Maple Team – East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust

The Maple Team identified a stark gap between the number of women booked for midwife-led care and those actually

giving birth in midwife-led units. By introducing an on-call system involving community midwives, they ensured midwife-led care was always available. Within just one month, birth unit calls doubled.

The Gill Adgie Members' Champion
Bianca Armitage – Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Bianca has been a tireless advocate for safe staffing and member engagement. Under her leadership, her RCM branch activity has flourished, meetings are now inclusive and well attended and membership numbers have increased. She has also led vital work supporting Band 2 and 3 staff within her trust.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Octavia Wiseman, Monica Franklin, Jacqui Kempen – South East London Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS)

Commissioned to co-design a parent education programme for migrant women with limited English proficiency, the team recruited 25 bilingual practitioners to deliver tailored sessions. So far, 122 women have taken part, with feedback showing increased confidence and understanding around birth.

Maternity Support Worker of the Year
Helen Sturgess – Royal Berkshire NHS

Helen leads the Vulnerable Women's Team at her trust, supporting women with complex social and health needs. Her work includes referrals to food banks and baby equipment charities, attendance at child protection meetings and delivering bespoke one-to-one antenatal classes.

Multidisciplinary Team of the Year
Memory Milk Gift Advisory Board – Countess of Chester NHS Trust

This multidisciplinary initiative supports bereaved parents with lactation care and provides the option to donate breastmilk after loss. The advisory board brings together clinical expertise and lived experience to ensure care is compassionate, informed and parent-led.

Student of the Year
Miroslawa Waligora – University of the West of Scotland

Miroslawa identified a gap in student training around interpreter-mediator care and developed a pioneering project to improve communication with women who face language barriers. Her work provides practical tools and resources that student midwives can immediately apply in practice.

Midwifery Society
Queens University Belfast Midwifery Society

The society has grown to more than 80 active members and runs seminars, study days and multidisciplinary events. It also fundraises for domestic abuse, bereavement and baby loss charities, and hosts an annual "Midthrives" event focused on wellbeing and professional development. **END**

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