

Eilidh Cole, Midwife, discusses her transition and learning as a newly qualified midwife

Transition from student to registered professional

I was feeling nervous commencing my first post as a newly qualified midwife (NQM) because I had done all of my training at a different hospital. I live in Glasgow and trained in Ayrshire, so made a choice to jump out of my comfort zone and in to a busy hospital with completely different policies and protocols. However, I was also excited to be my own person and be able to get on with my work without having to discuss with a practice supervisor or assessor what I'm doing beforehand.

As a student, although you are responsible for a select workload, you still have your practice supervisor and assessor to fall back on, but now I am it. I am responsible for these women and their babies and I think its safe to say, no length of time at university can prepare you for that jump. Qualifying at the busiest time of year for maternity and during a pandemic has been overwhelming and a shock to the system, to say the least. Nevertheless, I have been proud of myself for being able to totally rewire my brain with the new policies and protocols and work independently within such a short time.

Thinking about the challenges I have felt as a NQM, I found the short rotations challenging as I feel like I have just found my feet and then I have to move to a new area of the unit. I do think that I've been able to manage my time much better as the months have progressed, but maternity is unpredictable and due to patient safety issues, you can't just drop what you're doing and leave. Another challenge would probably be the sudden change in social life. I became very close to my university friends and due to our conflicting off duties, it has been difficult to spend time altogether. However, we have tried to forward plan our off duties around each other to combat this as it provides us with an opportunity to reflect and share our experiences as NQMs too.

Impact, learning and support

During the pandemic students were permitted to opt into an extended placement. I was in one area for 5 months which allowed me to consolidate my skills in that area to the fullest. I believe it truly set me in good stead for qualified life and provided me with a lot of independence prior to becoming full time registered midwife.

I have received my NHSGGC Flying Start NQP signifier badge, some of the benefits of wearing this is that it means staff know that I am newly qualified. Within the multidisciplinary team I am provided with more support when exposed to new experiences and learning new skills for my development. I wear it everyday and although not all staff are aware of the signifier badge it's a chance to share the information.

Other support available to me as a NQM was working alongside another midwife to find my feet. She was able to support me and was always in the background to answer any queries.

Some of the learning available to me on starting included Induction which was great, it drew on my three-year degree programme throughout the two weeks and allowed me to ask questions before I started in my areas. I have also been put on the midwifery bank which is great as I can gain more opportunities to improve my knowledge and skills.

I took learning from a situation that impacted on me which was when I had one of the most stressful days of my midwifery career so far. As a NQM I want to be as helpful as possible and try not to complain about feeling under pressure. The ward was busy and consisted of early labourers and inductions requiring immediate transfer to labour ward. The unit had many admissions throughout the day and there were other emergency situations which added to increased pressures. From that day on, I understood the concept of asking for help where needed and to stop thinking I needed to do everything by myself and, since then, I have stuck to this. The hospital has been extremely busy since starting, it has just been non-stop. I definitely think as a NQM I have had to adapt quickly to the working environment as every day has its own learning curves.

Flying Start NHS programme

I have accessed the NHSGGC Flying Start Portal after being made aware of it at induction by the Practice Education Facilitator (PEF) and the Practice Development midwife, it's a good resource. At this early point of my career I would like to sit down with my line manager of the area I have rotated into (as this is who my facilitator is) and discuss my Flying Start competencies but this hasn't been possible yet due to shift patterns and how busy it has been. I understand the goal of Flying Start but what is entailed, not so much. I think I need more support in this area, although I have been relating my learning and development to the Flying Start learning outcomes. I have started to write reflections as I know that this is a requirement. The first one I have written is in relation to picking up the early signs of sepsis and diagnosing chorioamnionitis. I will be able to use it answer one of the learning outcomes in the clinical practice pillar. I am also now aware that I can use my development programme to support my Flying Start portfolio and my other learning. I have started using e-Portfolio, so far I have the reflection mentioned previously, but hoping to get more guidance about Flying Start to ensure I'm following the correct path. Over the next few months, I'm hoping to just continue to develop my skills, this time in postnatal instead of antenatal, as I have rotated after 3 months already, it is basically like starting from scratch again as a NQM.

Update at end of first year

My final 6 months of my Flying Start year has been spent on labour ward. As a student, I never imagined myself enjoying registered life in labour ward as much as I have, I have definitely found where I'd love to be as a core midwife. I love how every day is different and I can spend time building relationships with women and their families. In addition, being able to bring joy to people in their vulnerable moments and seeing that transition to parenthood has been such a rewarding experience. I have become confident in managing labour care, handling emergency situations, and have received great patient feedback in the process which helps me see how far I have come since my first steps as a registered midwife. My team are also fantastic and so welcoming which has added to this fantastic experience, I will be sad when I receive my first rotation out of labour ward. All in all, it has been an eye opening first year I would never have imagined as a student, but has definitely come to a positive end.