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The *British Journal of Midwifery* aims to provide midwives, students and maternity services professionals with accessible, original clinical practice and research articles, while also providing summaries of high-quality research evidence, promoting evidence-based practice.

Cast your votes now

In response to the Government's announcement in March that 60% of NHS staff will not get any pay rise this year and only those at the top of their bands will receive a 1% unconsolidated lump sum, the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) has balloted its members for industrial action for the first time in history. As this issue went to press, midwives were busy casting their votes.

Cathy Warwick, chief executive of the RCM, said: 'A recent poll commissioned by the RCM showed that there is wide support for midwives taking industrial action and for a 1% pay increase for NHS staff. This public backing fills me with hope for our campaign and our pay ballot and I am sure it will be welcomed by midwives. I do, however, want to reassure women and their families that they will continue to receive safe care during any industrial action. The woman, her baby and their safety are a midwife's absolute priority and any action will not change that.' Earlier this month, Unison balloted its NHS members and found that the majority of voters (68%) were in favour of a strike and 88% were for action short of a strike (Unison, 2014).

Pay in the NHS is stagnating—it has not risen in-line with inflation for 5 years. The RCM has estimated that if a band 6 midwife had received pay increases that were in-line with inflation since 2010, their salary would be over £4000 higher (RCM, 2014). However, it is not only the rising cost of living that midwives are concerned about, simply going to work and being a registered midwife is costing more and more. With the Nursing and Midwifery Council proposing yet another hike in registration fees (NMC, 2014), how can we ensure that women and their babies receive high quality care if midwives can't afford to do their job? Whatever side of the debate you're on, take a stand and make your voice count.

Surely it makes sense to invest in those who are delivering our next generation. Especially as midwives and maternity support workers are working harder than ever—despite a small decrease in the birth rate in 2013 there were still 698 512 live births in England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2013). Unfortunately the Government has not recognised this hard work, at least in monetary terms.

It is therefore so important for you as midwives to prove your worth, and what better way of doing this than by receiving an award that has been judged by your peers? On 23 March 2015, the *British Journal of Midwifery* will be holding its 12th annual awards ceremony to celebrate and commemorate the wonderful and inspiring work midwives do on a daily basis.

Whatever you do, there is a category for you. This year we have nine awards to bestow: community midwife of the year, midwife of the year, team of the year, leadership in midwifery, student midwife of the year, educator of the year, contribution to midwifery, lifetime achievement and our new award, contribution to the eradication of FGM. This award will go to a midwife or team who has demonstrated outstanding dedication and commitment to helping eradicate FGM in the UK.

So place your votes now and show the world why midwifery is the best profession on the earth!

BJM

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2014) Consultation on proposed fee increase. <http://www.nmc-uk.org/Get-involved/Consultations/Fee-consultation/> (accessed 22 September 2014)

Office for National Statistics (2013) Births in England and Wales, 2013 <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/birth-summary-tables--england-and-wales/2013/stb-births-in-england-and-wales-2013.html> (accessed 22 September 2014)

Royal College of Midwives (2014) Midwives and maternity support workers need a payrise. <https://www.rcm.org.uk/sites/default/files/Pay%20Infographic%20-%20Value%20of%20Pay.jpg> (accessed 22 September 2014)

Unison (2014) NHS workers vote yes to strike action and action short of strike action. <http://www.unison.org.uk/nhs-workers-vote-yes-to-strike-action-and-action-short-of-strike-action> (accessed 22 September 2014)

For more information, please visit <http://awards.britishjournalofmidwifery.com>