

Personal reflection: Going through the revalidation pilot

Mark Smart is a dual-registered nurse and midwife, who works on a busy labour ward at a hospital in Wales. He took part in the revalidation pilot in 2015.

I was one of a number of staff on the Local Health Board I work for who took part in the revalidation pilot. My first reaction was: 'Goodness me! How am I going to achieve this? What exactly are they looking for?' It was natural anxiety as I didn't yet know what to do. As it was a pilot, there was no one who had already gone through the process who could share their experiences. It was exciting, but daunting, to be among the people to 'test' the process; we were entering the unknown.

Everything became a lot clearer and felt more manageable once I accessed the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) site and read the guidance. All the NMC resources are very helpful, and gave me a much better understanding of how to go about the process and put together my portfolio. One of the senior nurses at my hospital decided to put on roadshows once she had completed her revalidation application, to help other people prepare for their own revalidation. She arranged half a dozen of these roadshows over the course of a month. Attending these gave me a real insight into the revalidation process and how someone else had chosen to approach it. I think it's hugely useful to take advantage of the experiences of your colleagues and share your knowledge. As well as helping everyone individually, it will bring you closer as a team.

I knew that, to keep on top of my revalidation, I would need to update my portfolio as I went along. As midwives, we have to be organised with records and administration anyway, so this wasn't a problem. In fact, the experience of revalidation was considerably better than I expected. I kept an electronic copy of my

portfolio because I found this the easiest way for me—although it's important to be aware that the NMC clearly states that keeping an electronic portfolio is not a requirement.

I found that my employer actively made it easier for me and my fellow midwives to complete revalidation, which was very helpful. In order to revalidate, you need to show the NMC evidence that you have completed 35 hours of CPD. Where I work, we are required to attend a certain number of study days, which contribute to CPD hours. I also act as a mentor for student midwives, which gives me an additional source of hours.

The only personal challenge I see with revalidation in the future is in relation to my dual registration as a nurse and a midwife. I am very proud of my nursing qualification, but I am a midwife first and foremost—and with a recent drive at my hospital to recruit more nurses, it's becoming increasingly difficult for me to work nursing shifts. This means that it will be challenging for me to keep up enough practice hours to revalidate as a nurse as well as a midwife. I love being a midwife, though, and am glad that I can dedicate my time to focusing on that.

Of all the revalidation requirements, reflection will have by far the biggest influence on my practice. I'm in a lucky position because my team regularly sits down and reflects on work together, which really helps to build our professional relationships. We openly discuss what has gone well, and what we can do collaboratively to improve the way we work, and I think this helps everyone. I mentor students, and have worked with some who have needed quite a lot of support. Reflecting on this has allowed me to learn from certain situations, and I can take this learning forward when I mentor other students in the future.

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I found my reflective discussion to be very beneficial. I sat down with my supervisor and we went through my five reflective accounts one by one. It's not until you spend time with another person and get their perspective that you really understand how you can use your past experiences to improve your practice going forward.

The top tip I would give to midwives who haven't yet gone through revalidation is: remember to be organised about it. If you keep up to date with your portfolio and don't leave it all to the last minute, you'll find that revalidation is not only straightforward but also genuinely useful for your practice. It will show you that you're more experienced and have more skills than you realise, and it will highlight the areas that you can work on to make you an even better midwife.

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This case study was provided to BJM by the NMC.

For more information on revalidation, visit the dedicated NMC website at revalidation.nmc.org.uk

Are you revalidating?

BJM wants to hear from midwives at all levels who are going through the revalidation process and are happy to share their experiences. To contribute or for further information, please email the editor at bjm@markallengroup.com

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