

# What is happening in Scotland?

As part of our series on UK midwifery policy, Gillian Smith, director of RCM Scotland discusses the strengths and challenges of maternity care in Scotland.

It is really interesting to be celebrating the Centenary of the Midwives Act in Scotland in the same year as the Nursing and Midwifery Council are piloting its revalidation programme. There will be challenging times ahead, but I think because we have had statutory supervision of midwifery for years, ours will be an easier transition than our colleagues in nursing.

The centenary of the Midwives Act (Scotland) 1915 has got off to a very good start with an excellent research conference held in Dundee on 13 May, organised and led by Professor Mary Renfrew. The highlight of the conference was most definitely the dissemination of the Lancet Midwifery Series. There is no doubt that this is an amazing piece of work involving 35 researchers from across the world. The outcome has been a framework, which countries, including our own, can use to develop their maternity services. This is increasingly important as Scotland establish its maternity and neonatal review group. It is a unique opportunity to test this framework and I am optimistic that the review group will include this landmark piece of work in their considerations.

## International Day of the Midwife

The International Day of the Midwife was celebrated in Edinburgh this year on the 5 May with speakers from the International Confederation of Midwives, World Health Organization, the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) and the RCM Global Midwifery Team. Joy Kemp, the global advisor spoke about the Global Midwifery Twinning Project, which was a 3 year multi-country partnership in the Health Partnership Scheme funded by the UK Government and managed by the Tropical Health and Education Trust.

Gillian Smith  
Director  
RCM Scotland



Scotland was very happy to twin with the Midwifery Society of Nepal (MIDSON). Many relationships and friendships have been built up over the last 3 years, so our hearts were very heavy for our friends and colleagues in Nepal in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes, which have shattered this small nation.

The last 3 years have seen a number of volunteers being sent to Nepal from Scotland and England, and it would be hard to think that they have not left a lasting impact. The volunteers worked alongside clinical midwives to support them in developing quality midwifery care, build individual leadership capacity and transfer skills and knowledge. Volunteers worked with the universities to develop curricula, improve teaching standards and to support student midwives in their learning. It was with great pride that I attended the first ever midwifery conference in Nepal in September 2013. Almost 300 delegates had travelled from across Nepal to Kathmandu with overwhelming enthusiasm to learn and a desire to have recognised midwifery training.

It is unfortunate that midwifery is not a discreet profession in Nepal, but changes are afoot and our support has helped to give them the strength to fight for this.

Given this was a twinning programme, we cannot under-estimate the lasting effect on our volunteers and what they will inevitably take home to their individual workplaces.

Who knows where the future of the RCM international work will take us but what I am sure of is that our organisation and our members will rise to the challenge.

## The challenges in Scotland

Many of the challenges in Scotland are similar, but on a different scale, from our colleagues in Nepal with regard to sustaining services in remote and rural locations. As Scotland heads in to its review of maternity and neonatal services, we have to consider some of the challenges around supporting and sustaining services. We have a very tight time frame for the review with an anticipated report going to the ministers in spring/summer 2016. The chair of the group has still to be announced. However, we expect the RCM to have a seat on this strategic group. The birth rate, maternity demographics, Scottish geography and workforce demands have put additional pressure on our services. There has been a Scottish Government group chaired by the chief midwife looking at planning around the ageing midwifery workforce. The information statistics division and the workforce planners have developed a very good tool, which looks at scenarios and plans on the back of what might be the outcome of anticipated retirements. The review will be set in the context of the clinical strategy and the findings of the 7-day service review and will be focused on the three cornerstones of choice, safety and quality. It is hoped there will be some cross-over with the review in England, but the added dimension for us is the remote and ruralness of the country and how we can sustain women's choices in all locations while providing a safe service. For us it is good that we do not have to deal with a changed government, nor a pay dispute but we are aware that next year our country will go to the polls in the Scottish elections and the current administration will be judged on their successes at the ballot box.

BJM

*The views expressed here are Gillian Smith's personal views and do not necessarily represent those of the RCM.*