

## Seminar 5: **Are we moving forward with the role of Consultant Midwives in the UK?**

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### **Abstract**

Consultant Midwives were introduced in the UK as a highly motivated, influential group of clinical experts, advancing midwifery practice through their clinical leadership, research and educational roles. Nearly two decades later, little is understood about the growth of this role and how they fulfil their original key functions within the current maternity system. A survey and local intelligence gathering exercise was undertaken with the support of the UK's professional organisation for midwifery, Royal College of Midwives, to determine the overall number and demographics of Consultant Midwives, explore the range of clinical specialities and map their location and coverage.

This study identified 83 Consultant Midwives working in the UK and crown dependencies with detailed data available for the vast majority (87%). Around a third of the NHS Trusts/Health Boards were reported as employing Consultant Midwives and the indications were that these were usually first appointments. The primary speciality area of Consultant Midwives was normality and public health and there were sometimes dual areas of speciality including intrapartum care, safeguarding and other clinical areas. The challenges remain with at least half of the Consultant Midwives being aged over 50 years old, retirements could lead to shortfalls in the coming decade.

Given the current national context for the implementation of The Best Start: The Review of Maternity and Neonatal Services in Scotland, it is necessary for a health system level acknowledgement of their contributions and impact within midwifery and maternity care. This presentation will provide insights into the research and policy literature for Consultant Midwives in the UK, and discuss how the role can be stabilised and substantial part of the midwifery workforce as originally outlined in UK policy.