

# Career Tracks Midwifery

Where to start  
What qualifications do you need  
Career routes  
Relevant training  
How can NEC help

[www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk)



Develop your  
**Progress your**  
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# Your future, your goals

**Gain qualifications, start a career, change direction. Whatever your goal we'll help you achieve it.**

At the National Extension College (NEC) we've been providing distance learning to help young people and adults learn to change their future for over 55 years. During that time, we've seen, on many occasions, how someone's life can be transformed by taking the right course at the right time.

Each year thousands of students, like you, from around the world, access our quality courses and expert tutor support to develop their knowledge and skills, and achieve their goals.

Some of our students need qualifications to go on to further or higher education. Some plan to take professional courses in areas such as teaching or healthcare and just need that essential GCSE or A level to make it happen.

Whatever your reason for studying, we look forward to welcoming you to NEC as a student.

This guide will give you an overview of how to embark on a career as a midwife, what qualifications you will need, and how NEC can help.

For more information on the courses we offer, visit our website **[www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk)**.

## Contents

<b>Are you thinking about a career as a midwife?</b>	3
Midwifery as a career	3
What qualifications, qualities and skills will I need?	3
<b>NHS bursary</b>	4
<b>Routes into midwifery</b>	5
Midwifery apprenticeships	5
Case study: On course for a career in midwifery	5
The essentials (GCSE Maths and English)	6
<b>Gaining experience</b>	6
Work experience	6
Volunteering	6
Open events	7
Student midwives	7
<b>How NEC can help you fulfil your ambition to be a midwife</b>	8

# Are you thinking about a career as a midwife?

This NEC Career Tracks guide tells you about the routes into the profession and looks at the qualifications, qualities and skills you'll need, and how NEC can help you.

## Midwifery as a career

Midwives are involved in all stages of a woman's pregnancy. Working in hospital and community settings, midwives are usually a pregnant woman's first point of contact, responsible for providing care and supporting them to make informed choices about the care they receive. The work can be physically and mentally demanding and may involve exposure to sensitive situations such as bereavement and domestic abuse. Midwives can become specialists in areas such as public health, diabetes or perinatal mental health, and there may be opportunities to work in research or education.

## What qualifications, qualities and skills will I need?

To practise as a midwife, you will need to have a Pre-Registration Degree in Midwifery approved by the **Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)**, to be registered with them, and to meet their requirements for good health and good character. Acceptance onto a midwifery degree course is subject to satisfactory health clearance and a **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check**.

If you plan to study to become a midwife, you will need to meet the academic entry requirements of your chosen university. You will also need to demonstrate at interview personal qualities and skills, for example:

- ▶ a calm and caring nature with the ability to put people at ease
- ▶ confidence communicating with people from a range of different backgrounds, answering questions and sharing what you know
- ▶ good observation and listening skills.



# NHS bursary

In January 2020, the UK government announced the introduction of an NHS bursary benefiting those studying midwifery, nursing and other allied health care professions.

## What is the bursary?

All students studying courses in relevant professions, from September 2020, will receive at least £5,000 a year to help cover living expenses. This is not a loan so will not have to be paid back.



## Additional support

As well as the £5,000 per year afforded to all students, some students will be eligible for up to £3,000 more funding.

There is up to £3,000 additional funding, for:

- ▶ specialist disciplines that struggle to recruit, including areas such as mental health nursing
- ▶ an additional childcare allowance, on top of the £1,000 already on offer
- ▶ areas of the country that have seen a drop in people accepted onto nursing, midwifery and allied health courses over the past year



## Can I get any further funding?

Depending on your personal circumstances, you may be eligible for other student funding. Receiving the bursary does not exempt you from applying for tuition fee loans or maintenance loans through the Student Loans Company.

**Student Finance England**

**Student Finance Wales**

For more information about additional funding available, visit the **UCAS website**.

# Routes into midwifery

There is no shortcut into midwifery, even if you have a degree in another subject, you will still be required to complete a *Pre-Registration Degree in Midwifery*. Entry onto these courses is very competitive, so the better the qualifications and experience you have, the better your chances will be of securing a place. You'll need a minimum of five GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A\* to C) including English, maths and a science subject, and at least two A levels.

In the UK, midwifery education and training programmes are only run at Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) approved educational institutions. Degree courses take three years to complete, when studying full-time. You'll spend around half of this time on supervised practice placements in community and hospital settings, and you'll learn about the physical, emotional, social, political and cultural aspects of maternity care. You'll be taught to understand, promote and facilitate normal childbirth and to identify complications that may arise for mother and baby. You'll also learn how to provide unbiased information and promote health and wellbeing in women and families.

A list of institutions approved by the NMC to provide pre-registration midwifery courses can be found on their website [www.nmc.org.uk](http://www.nmc.org.uk), or you can search for NMC approved courses using the **NHS Careers course finder**. Applications for full-time approved midwifery courses are made through **UCAS** and should be submitted in the autumn of the year before the course starts. For part-time courses you will need to contact the individual universities.

## Midwifery apprenticeships

An apprenticeship for midwives in England is now available. It is a degree-level apprenticeship meaning you will still need to gain a degree in midwifery before you can practise. You can keep up-to-date with the latest information and developments on this new apprenticeship on the **Royal College of Midwives (RCM)** website.

## NEC A levels and GCSEs

NEC offers a wide range of GCSEs and A level courses to support you in applying to do a degree in midwifery, including **A level Biology**, **GCSE English Language** and **English Literature**, **GCSE Maths** and IGCSEs in **Biology**, **Chemistry**, **Physics**, **Combined Science** and **Double Science**.

## Case Study

### On course for a career in midwifery

A single parent of four, Lottie is at university studying for a degree in midwifery after completing A level Biology with NEC. Getting to university meant starting virtually from scratch with science after a 25-year gap, at the same time as holding down various jobs to support her family. High points of studying with NEC were the freedom to study when it suited her, the support of NEC staff and being part of the online group set up by A level Biology students. She says, *"At last I will have a qualification which gives me the chance to develop my career doing something meaningful and rewarding. if you're determined and prepared to work hard, you can change direction, whatever your age."*



# The essentials

## GCSE Maths

Maths is an essential skill, that we use everyday, in all areas of our lives. From adding up a weekly shop, to working out how to decorate a room – maths enables us to find patterns and structure, and opens up a wide range of opportunities.

Our **GCSE Maths** online course is written by experts in the field. Well-structured materials covering topics – such as fractions, decimals and pythagoras – will enable you to gain confidence in basic mathematical skills, before progressing to more challenging areas.

## GCSE English Language

Gaining a GCSE in English language is vital for future career progression and a minimum requirement for many further education courses. However, it's not just a 'means to an end', this course will help you develop your reading and writing skills, and enable you to communicate and express your ideas more effectively.

Studying **GCSE English Language** online is a flexible way to gain key skills, that you'll use in all aspects of your life. Supported by a personal tutor, you'll explore the use of words in different contexts and gain a deeper understanding of the power and influence of the spoken and written word.

# Gaining experience

Experience in a caring role in a health and social care setting is an advantage if you are planning to apply to university to do a midwifery degree.

## Work experience

The best way to get work experience before applying for a university place is to contact the Work Experience Department or Head of Midwifery at your local maternity unit to ask if there are any shadowing or placement opportunities available. Make it clear that you are interested in a career as a midwife and where you are on your route working towards this. Other options include applying for paid employment as a healthcare support worker or seeking a volunteering role in a local hospital. All will give you valuable insights into your potential new career.

## Volunteering

Volunteering placements can be useful for developing your communication skills and will build confidence in dealing with a range of different people. Useful volunteer work outside of hospital settings could include supporting teenage parents, working with breastfeeding groups and charities that deal with issues like birth defects, bereavement and miscarriage.

**Do-it** is a national database of volunteering opportunities, searchable by postcode and organisation, and is a possible source of volunteering opportunities.

*"I am currently working as a primary school teacher. However I would like to change careers and become a midwife. To do this I will need to complete a three-year degree course. The entry requirements for most of the degree courses ask for a science A level, which I don't have. I have decided to take A level Biology as some institutions ask for this with the practical endorsement. I also feel that it would be useful to have an understanding of biology before I embark on a midwifery degree."*

**NEC A level Biology student**

## Open events

Attend open days and open evenings at universities offering midwifery degrees. These give you the chance to meet current students and lecturers, get information about the course and its specific requirements, where your clinical placements will most likely be, and to really find out what the course is like.

## Student midwives

All student midwives must be supervised by a qualified midwife mentor during their clinical experience, this forms at least half of the degree programme.

As a newly qualified midwife you will have a formal period of support under the guidance of an experienced colleague who will offer help and advice during your first few months of professional practise. As you become more experienced there are lots of opportunities for you to progress in your career, and as well as supporting mothers and babies, you will support other midwives. You could become a team manager or supervisor and combine managing other staff with on-going hands-on involvement with families. This could lead on to a role as head of midwifery or even director of midwifery services. Or you could decide to undertake further training to become a health visitor, or to move onto a management, teaching or clinical research role.

The **Royal College of Midwives (RCM)** is a professional association and specialised trade union representing the interests of midwives across the UK. Midwives, maternity support workers and students midwives can join the RCM.

# Working as a midwife

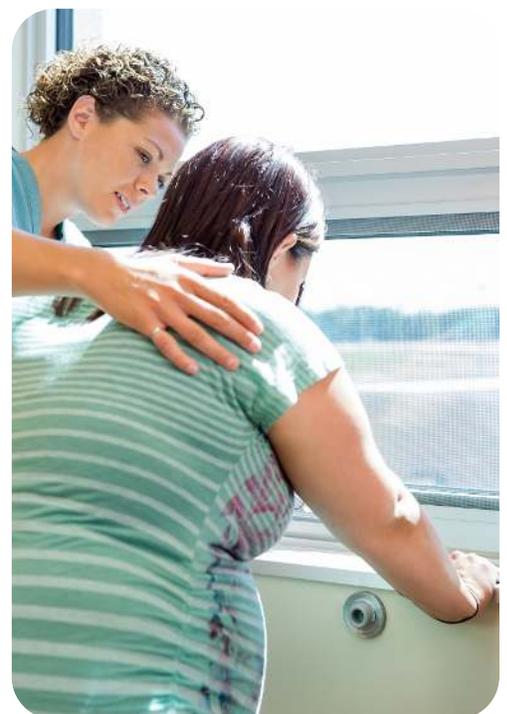
## Working overseas

Organisations such as **Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)** provide the opportunity to work as a midwife overseas. In some countries, midwives must also hold Registered Nurse Status in order to practise. If you plan to work as a midwife overseas you should check all the requirements of doing so in the country where you plan to work.

## Related career choices

Midwife is just one of the job roles supporting women during their pregnancy, labour and post-natal period. You could also consider:

- ▶ Maternal support worker - working under the supervision of a registered midwife, you'll care for women and their babies through all the vital stages of pregnancy, birth and the few days after.
- ▶ Neonatal nurse - working in acute hospitals in intensive care, high dependency and special baby units, you'll care for newborn babies who are premature or sick. You could also work in the community supporting babies and families recently discharged from hospital.
- ▶ Health visitor - if you are passionate about promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing illness, you could undertake additional training so that you can become a health visitor and work with pre-school children or at-risk individuals in the community.
- ▶ Newborn hearing screener - working in a hospital or clinic you'll carry out a hearing screening test, something that is offered to all new parents in the first few weeks after their baby is born.



# How NEC can help you fulfil your ambition to be a midwife

## Essential GCSE qualifications

You'll need English language or English literature and maths to be allocated a place on any approved midwifery course.

Click below for information about studying these essential GCSE qualifications with NEC:

**GCSE Maths**

**GCSE English Language**

**GCSE English Literature**

**IGCSE Biology**

**IGCSE Chemistry**

**IGCSE Physics**

**IGCSE Combined Science**

**IGCSE Double Science**



## Course fees

NEC course fees cover:

- ▶ all course materials
- ▶ tuition by a personal tutor who is a subject specialist
- ▶ online diagnostic exercises and assessments
- ▶ quizzes, videos, ebooks, and webinars.

When you've made your choice, you can enrol at any time and start studying when it suits you.

## Qualifications gaps at A level

If you're planning to study for a Pre-Registration Degree in Midwifery at university, you'll also need at least two or three A levels. Whether you are short of a subject to add to those you passed at school or are aiming for a better grade in a subject you already have, NEC can help:

**A level Biology**

**A level Chemistry**

**A level Physics**

**A level Psychology**

**A level Sociology**

## About NEC courses

- ▶ NEC courses are designed by teachers, examiners and distance learning experts, so you can be certain that they cover the curriculum and are designed for independent study.
- ▶ NEC courses are delivered online through **learn@nec** our online learning platform, so you can study at a time and place to suit you and be part of a national community of people studying with us.
- ▶ As an NEC student, you will have a personal tutor who is a qualified subject expert to support you in your studies, giving you feedback on assignments and preparing you for your exams.

## Distance learning is flexible

Learning to fit your lifestyle:

- ▶ Download and print the course materials and study wherever you are.
- ▶ Read an ebook on your daily commute.
- ▶ Watch a video or listen to a recording on your mobile phone or tablet.

*Disclaimer:* the information in this Career Tracks was up-to-date when it was published in January 2020. If you are thinking of a career as a midwife, you are advised to make direct contact with the organisations cited here or call our Course Advice Team on 0800 389 2839.

## Career Tracks

NEC's Career Tracks provide an insight into the most popular career choices made by our students. As well as information on the qualifications you need for your chosen career, entry routes and training, NEC Career Tracks look at the personal qualities you will need and list websites where you can find out more.

