

Research and development strategy

2021-2024

Building capacity, sharing knowledge, improving care



Promoting · Supporting · Influencing

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Welcome to the RCM research and development strategy

Almost every element of our practice as midwives is based on research evidence. It is fundamental to what we do and how we do it. I want it to be fundamental to the RCM too, and that is why I'm proud that we're launching this research strategy. All of us have a vested interest in developing and contributing research that improves our practice as midwives, yet it can sometimes seem too daunting or difficult.

With this strategy, the RCM wants to empower and encourage midwives to take an active role in research, to take the leap of faith our predecessors did. Midwifery-led research demonstrated the benefits of water births and removed routine episiotomies, not to mention all the other social and scientific work that midwives have contributed to. Whether it's a small step, like completing a survey for a research study, or a giant leap, like embarking on a career in midwifery research, or doing a PhD, the RCM is here to support you.

This strategy signals the ambition of the RCM to be an organisation that has research evidence at its core and that is committed to enhancing the research capacity and capability of midwives for the benefit of women, babies and families.

In order for women and their babies to receive high quality care, practice needs to be underpinned by evidence and provided by midwives who think critically about the care that they provide. This critical thinking requires midwives to remain curious, to question usual custom and practice and to develop skills in searching and reading the evidence with a critical eye, in order to inform their decision-making and the care that they provide.

This research strategy provides a framework for the College and its members to embed research-mindedness throughout the profession and fits with the aspirations of the new Nursing and Midwifery Council future midwife standards (NMC, 2019).

As midwives now look to the future, there will never be a more important time for this forward-thinking RCM research strategy to signal that a new generation of midwives are ready to take the lead in building and using the evidence base on which maternity care must be founded.



G Walton

Gill Walton
RCM Chief Executive



Helen Cheyne

Helen Cheyne
RCM (Scotland) Professor
of Midwifery Research



Billie Hunter

Billie Hunter
RCM Professor of Midwifery

Our mission

Promoting midwifery, quality maternity services and professional standards

Supporting our members, individually and collectively

Influencing on behalf of members and the women and families they care for

Our vision for research and development

- **Promoting** midwifery research and evidence-based practice to develop the professional standing of midwifery, the quality of maternity services and professional standards.
- **Supporting** our members, individually and collectively, to build a stronger research and knowledge base, developed by and relevant to midwifery practice.
- **Influencing** systems and practice to embed research across the midwifery profession, including in clinical settings, and to develop improved career pathways for midwives in research.

Our goals for research and development

Building capacity

- Establish the midwifery profession's research needs and provide support for midwives, particularly at the beginning of their research journey
- Raise the profile of midwifery research and those who carry it out
- Highlight the career opportunities in research, including the clinical academic career pathway
- Encourage and support midwives at all levels to develop their evidence-based practice and get involved with research



Collaborating with others

- Strengthen relationships with education and research institutions
- Work with others to develop sustainable funding cycles to support early career researchers and fellowships
- Link with existing midwifery research networks and help to support the establishment of others if needed
- Tap into our membership base to amplify and support appropriate projects which further knowledge and practice



Influencing

- Identify research priorities for midwifery research
- Work with key funders to secure funding for midwifery research
- Demonstrate the importance of engagement with research to academic and clinical employers to develop more midwifery research roles
- Ensure midwives have a seat at the table when developing and deciding research priorities



Next steps for 2020/21:

1. Work with members to understand their research needs and identify priorities for midwifery research
2. Develop a mentorship scheme for midwives requesting support for research proposal writing and funding applications.
3. Develop, promote and support the clinical academic career pathway and the RCM's career framework to demonstrate routes into a research career
4. Collaborate with and support research projects with individuals and groups
5. Support midwives to develop their evidence-based practice

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For enquiries about the RCM call **0300 303 0444** or email **research@rcm.org.uk**

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