

Real-life story - Olivia Shelton

Despite being advised to choose a different career path because her A-level grades weren't high enough, Olivia followed her heart and is now a successful caseload midwife.



Olivia Shelton Caseload midwife

Employer or university Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Salary range £25k-£35k

How I got into the role

In 2015 I graduated with a degree in midwifery from the University of Huddersfield. I started work at University College of London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and later moved to Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust where I am currently working.

During the final year of my training, we were encouraged to 'caseload' some women, meaning we followed them through their pregnancy, labour and postnatal period. Caseloading these women meant I was able to build good rapport whilst providing them with continuity of care. It also meant they had a friendly face they could trust as I had been with them from the start of their pregnancy.

After completing my preceptorship programme and working a year as a midwife, I discovered that some hospitals encourage caseloading and they employ midwives specifically to do that. I enjoyed it so much as a student that I decided to apply for it. I got the role and haven't looked back since!

What I do

My day varies from week to week. Some days I'm in the hospital providing labour care to both low or high risk women. On other days I may be running my own antenatal clinic or conducting postnatal visits out in the community.

I also work as part of a small team that provides antenatal classes to new parents-to-be to educate them and prepare them for labour and birth, breastfeeding and caring for their newborns.

You never forget the first day you help a woman bring a new life into the world!

The best bits and challenges

I am extremely proud of myself for becoming a midwife, especially after being told by a careers adviser at college that I should contemplate a different career path because my A-level grades weren't high enough. It just shows that if you put your mind to something, you can do it!

I enjoy witnessing the transition women go through during their pregnancy, birth and postnatal period and feel very privileged to be able to be part of that journey with them. You never forget the first day you help a woman bring a new life into the world!

Being a midwife is an exceptionally rewarding career and I am extremely grateful to have a job which I love. However, it does not come without challenges. I have had to work weekends, sometimes missing out on friends' and family's events, and stay behind late at work.

But don't let that put you off because I promise that seeing the difference you've made and how you've impacted a woman's life – no matter how big or small – will make up for it.

Life outside work

I am part of a social netball team and we play matches once or twice a week which keeps me fit and healthy. I also find practising yoga useful, especially after a long day at work; it helps clear my head space.

When I'm off work, I make time to see friends and family. It is extremely important to me to help maintain a work-life balance.

Career plans and top tips for others

Since completing my midwifery degree, I have undertaken several additional courses to help aid and further my career. I have recently completed a mentorship course which means I can

now teach student midwives during their training. I would also like to complete a perinatal mental health course in the future and one day specialise as a perinatal mental health midwife.

As a midwife, you need to have patience, compassion, be a good communicator and be committed to your role. You also need to remember that being a midwife will at times impact your emotional and mental strength.

One piece of advice that I was given was to “always care for someone as if they were your mother or sister”, provide them with the best care possible and always greet someone with a friendly smile.

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