

Revised Scope of Practice for kahu pōkai | midwives.

Tēnā koutou,

We are pleased to inform you all that the revised Scope of Practice for Midwives in Aotearoa New Zealand (the revised Scope) has been approved by Te Tatau o te Whare Kahu | the Midwifery Council (the Council).

The Council received and considered feedback from the second round of public consultation on the revised Scope during 2023. The Council also gave further consideration to legal advice that had been provided and, in February, we sought the views of the Minister of Health, the Hon Dr Shane Reti.

At its meeting in February 2024, the Council reviewed all the information and unanimously agreed to adopt the attached revised Scope, with the inclusion of an explanatory paragraph and a few additional words to clarify the intent.

We believe the revised Scope upholds the mana of Te Ao Māori and Tangata Tiriti worldviews. It is inclusive and affirms and enables kahu pōkai | midwives to practise in ways that meet the needs of all whānau in Aotearoa. The revised Scope will support our profession's ability to address a detrimental imbalance of representation, understanding and appreciation of Māori knowledge, values and practice.

Despite some misinterpretation of the revised Scope in the public arena, the Council's intention is that the primary obligation of a kahu pōkai | midwife is to wāhine hapū/woman/pregnant person and their newborn baby. The inclusion of whānau in the revised Scope recognises the importance of whānau in creating a safe and nurturing environment for wāhine hapū/ woman/pregnant person and the newborn baby.

Background - the Aotearoa Midwifery Project

The Council is responsible for ensuring that kahu pōkai | midwives are competent to practise and can be responsive to the contemporary needs of whānau. The work of this project has been essential in considering contemporary midwifery practice in Aotearoa and examining the cultural and clinical impact kahu pōkai | midwives have on all whānau.

The project was initiated in 2020 and has been undertaken in three stages. Each stage corresponds to one of the three related documents that provide the foundation for the regulation of midwifery practice in Aotearoa. Each document relates to the Council's functions as specified in the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the HPCAA).

- Stage one - The Midwifery Scope of Practice
- Stage two - The Midwifery Standards of Competence (currently known as the Competencies for Entry to the Register of Midwives)
- Stage three - The Standards for Approval of Pre-Registration Midwifery Education Programmes and Accreditation of Tertiary Education Organisations (3rd Edition)

The revised Scope of Practice for Midwives in Aotearoa New Zealand

The Council is required, under the HPCAA, to prescribe the Scope of Practice of a kahu pōkai | midwife. Scopes of practice provide the broad boundaries of practice across the profession and all care provided by midwives must sit within it.

We understand that a new scope of practice represents a change for the workforce, so there will be a lead in period for when it comes into effect. For many, this will be straightforward and will merely reflect the breadth of the work they already do to support all whānau during their pregnancy and birth journeys.

We would like to reassure all kahu pōkai | midwives that, if a complaint or notification is made, it will be considered against the scope of practice that was in place at that time of the events that are the subject of the complaint or notification.

The Council is committed to making sure that all kahu pōkai |midwives have the education and support they need to practice confidently within the revised Scope. Council staff are preparing further educative material to support kahu pōkai |midwives to transition to the requirements of the revised Scope. We will be in touch to let you know further details as they come available.

We are currently finalising work on revised Standards of Competence and Pre-Registration Education Standards. We expect that they will align with the revised Scope.

We understand the importance of getting this right and are grateful to everyone who made thoughtful and considered submissions during the various feedback processes.

We would like to acknowledge everyone for the mahi they have put into working on Aotearoa Midwifery Project over the past three years. In particular, we would like to thank the Co-chairs, Dr Hope Tupara and Dr Judith McAra-Couper for their leadership; and members of the Collaborative Reference Group and the Project Working Group for all the commitment and expertise they have put into developing the revised Scope and drafting revised Standards of Competence.

Work is continuing on drafting revised Standards of Competence and we expect to embark on another public consultation on the revised Standards of Competence in June 2024. After that consultation, the Council will review the feedback with a view to finalising revised Standards of Competence by the end of July 2024. The Council hopes to run a programme of education about the Scope and revised Standards of Competence for the profession during August and September.

We intend to submit the revised Scope to the New Zealand Gazette in April and expect the revised Scope to come into effect on 1 October 2024.

Ki tā te whakatauki, 'Ahakoa he iti, He Pounamu' nā whai ano, kia pupuri ake tatou i aua kupu me te mōhiotanga, koinei te timatanga o tētahi haerenga whakahirahira ki te whakamana i ngā reanga kei te tipu, kei te whānau tonu mai.

We hold true to the proverb, 'Ahakoa he iti, He Pounamu', and while this is a small step, it is the beginning of a journey in a direction that will help improve the experiences and livelihood of generations to come.

Nāku iti noa, nā

Kerry Adams, Tangata Tiriti Co-Chair

Kiley Clark, Tangata Whenua Co-Chair



Members of Council: Jude Cottrell, Sue Kedgley, Chris Mallon, Ngarangi Pritchard, Melanie Tarrant