



Statement on support and role of the midwife

September 2018

The midwifery scope of practice statement is the legally gazetted statement that articulates the role and work of the midwife.

Within the statement, support is clearly stated as a key function of a midwife:

“The midwife works in partnership with the women, on her own professional responsibility, to give the woman the necessary support, care and advice during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period up to six weeks, to facilitate births and to provide care for the newborn.”

Support therefore is an integral part of midwifery practice.

From time to time, cases are referred to the Council where the midwife has handed over care of a woman but they remain in the clinical environment under the stance that they are “supporting the woman”. When something has gone amiss, some midwives have been under the belief that they have had no professional responsibility for events that occur within the clinical context.

The Council’s position is that midwives have a duty of care to act at all times as a health professional with women and their families. When a midwife is with a woman in a clinical context, she is always in attendance as a midwife. It is not appropriate for midwives to advise they are ‘only attending as a support person’ for their clients. They are attending as a midwife because support and advocacy are essential components of midwifery.

In situations where the midwife transfers clinical responsibility, the Referral Guidelines support the midwife to remain and provide care to the woman in conjunction with and with the support of the hospital team. Any midwife in attendance must act if they observe a changing clinical picture and must ensure that they communicate and document accordingly.

Midwives who attend elective caesarean sections as support are also reminded that while the DHB has a responsibility to ensure the safe staffing of the theatre environment, they as midwives have a duty of care to act if they are asked to in an unexpected emergency situation.

Midwives who attend the care and births of family members, daughters, granddaughters etc are advised to negotiate their role with the midwife well in advance so that there is a clear understanding for all parties concerned.

Midwives have a duty of care to act at all times as a health professional with women and their families



The Midwifery Council

The Midwifery Council makes sure midwives meet and maintain professional standards of education, conduct and performance so that they deliver high quality healthcare throughout their careers. The safety of mothers and babies comes first.