

Northern Ireland Nursing & Midwifery Career Frequently Asked Questions and Myth Busting

Education Routes

- Nursing: Complete an NMC-approved BSc Nursing programme (Adult, Mental Health, Learning Disability, or Children's) at Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, or The Open University.
- Midwifery: Direct-entry midwifery degree or post-registration programme for qualified nurses at Queen's University Belfast.
- Advanced roles require postgraduate qualifications such as MSc Advanced Practice offered regionally.

Registration with NMC

- Complete an NMC-approved programme.
- Apply via NMC Online, pay fee, and confirm health & character.
- Overseas applicants must pass a computer-based test (CBT), an objective structured clinical examination OSCE, and provide English language evidence.

Career Progression

- Start as Registered Nurse/Midwife and then Senior Nurse/Midwife
- Career Journeys within and across 3 NI Career Pathways:
- Clinical Practice Pathway: e.g. Specialist Nurse/Midwife, Advanced Practitioner, Consultant roles.
- Leadership & Management Pathway: e.g. Ward Manager, Assistant Director, Director roles.
- Education & Research: e.g. Practice Educator, Lecturer, Research Fellow, Professor.

Financial Support

- Department of Health NI commissions places and provides student bursaries for pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes.
- Return-to-practice programmes available for those re-entering the profession
- Department of Health NI commission post graduate education programmes.

Myths and Facts

Nursing

- Myth: Nursing is just about following doctors' orders.
- Fact: Nurses are autonomous professionals who assess, plan, and deliver care.
- Myth: Nursing is only for women.
- Fact: Nursing is a gender-neutral profession with increasing male participation.
- Myth: Nurses have limited career progression.
- Fact: Nurses can advance to specialist, advanced practice, consultant, leadership, and academic roles.
- Myth: Only young people enter the nursing and midwifery professions.
- Fact: People of all ages join nursing and midwifery. Many start as a second career or return to education later in life.
- Myth: Nurses only work 12-hour shifts.
- Fact: There are a variety of shift patterns within nursing practice settings, not only 12-hour shifts, part-time roles, and flexible schedules in hospital, community, education, and research settings.
- Myth: Nursing is an easy job.
- Fact: Nursing requires complex clinical skills, emotional resilience, and continuous education.
- Myth: Nurses only work in hospitals.
- Fact: Nurses work in community, research, education, leadership, global health settings.

Midwifery

- Myth: Midwives only deliver babies.
- Fact: Most midwives in Northern Ireland work in diverse roles in hospitals and community settings e.g. family planning, sexual and reproductive health, preconception support, postpartum and newborn support, breast feeding guidance, women wellness care. In addition to clinical roles, midwives also have career options across education, research and operational management career pathways
- Myth: Midwives are not medically trained.
- Fact: Midwives are highly trained professionals regulated by the NMC. They are skilled in clinical decision-making, managing normal and complex pregnancies, and providing holistic care for mothers and babies.
- Myth: Midwifery is outdated
- Fact: Midwifery is evidence-based and integral to modern maternity care and crucial to ensuring safety and positive experience.
- Myth: You must be a nurse to become a midwife.
- Fact: In Northern Ireland, you can enter midwifery through direct-entry programmes without prior nursing qualification.
- Myth: Midwives only care for mothers.
- Fact: Midwives also support newborns and families, providing holistic care.