BSc (Hons) Midwifery Course

Student Midwife Caseload Holding Guidelines

March 2015
Rationale for caseload holding

Caseload holding midwifery allows midwives to provide one to one care to women and their families throughout the full span of their pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal experience.

The student midwife recruits women to her caseload and then, under supervision from a qualified midwife, plans, implements and delivers appropriate care for the duration of the childbearing experience. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (2009, 17) state that midwifery students “must provide care and support to a group of women from early in their pregnancy throughout the antenatal period, during the labour and birth and then into the postnatal period until care by the midwife is complete”. Thus caseload holding is a compulsory element of the pathway.

Caseload holding involves the midwife using her full range of skills promoting the principles of choice, control and continuity of care by a known carer as espoused within the social model of care (Walsh and Newburn 2002).

Holding a caseload should prove to be an extremely satisfying and positive learning experience and offer the student midwife an opportunity to develop autonomous practice autonomously skills whilst under the supervision of a qualified midwife (NMC 2009, 17).

The Student Midwife’s Perspective

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (2009, 17) state that “providing this experience to all student midwives enables them to better understand the impact of pregnancy, birth and the integration of a new baby into family life, as well as learning about the practicalities of planning implementing and evaluating midwifery care in a way that is relevant to women.”

Caseload holding should prepare the student to practice autonomously upon registration as a midwife. Student evaluations on caseloading (Rawson, Fry & Lewis 2008, 639) suggest that midwifery students found the experience to be an invaluable learning opportunity. It gave students the chance to acquire management skills such as planning, meeting organisational needs and decision making.
The Women’s Perspective

Feedback from women in student caseloads has been very positive with women principally welcoming the continuity of carer that caseload holding offered them and their families (Rawson, Fry & Lewis 2008). This was the case especially where this system was not the model utilised within their local service provision.

The Mentors perspective

Evaluations on caseload holding have found that mentors felt that it enhanced the student’s confidence in their practice and competency (Rawson, Fry & Lewis 2008). In particular the mentors found that caseload holding supported the rapid acquisition of midwifery skills considered vital for the role of the midwife and attractive to future employers.
GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT MIDWIVES TO ACHIEVE THE CASE LOAD

What does the student midwife need to do?

- Identify 3 women under the care of the student's community midwife. This midwife should be a sign off mentor.
- The student should aim to be involved in at least 5 episodes of care for each woman.

Antenatal Episodes of Care
Ideally this should include the booking appointment and one other antenatal care episode. If the student is unable to recruit women from booking they should endeavour to obtain a “booking” history at the first meeting.

Intrapartum Episode of Care
One episode of care should be during the intrapartum period. This does not necessarily need to be the birth. Women experiencing all types of births such as normal or instrumental delivery and caesarean births can be included within the caseload.

Postnatal Episodes of Care
Two episodes of care must occur within the postnatal period. One of the episodes of care should take place within the community setting.

Contact with women on the caseload

Effective communication between the student, the sign off mentor, other midwives and the women on the caseload is an essential part of the case loading process.

According to Stevens & McCourt (2002), the intimate nature of the mother/midwife relationship is magnified during the case loading relationship. The role and responsibilities of the student, the mentors and the families remain as they have been throughout midwifery training. It is important that the student is able to fulfil the
role of a “professional friend” whilst maintaining clear and appropriate professional boundaries (NMC 2008).

To recruit women and families the student needs to:

- Identify women that the student feels may be suitable for a caseload (may include both high and low risk women). Ideally they will be women whom the student might reasonably expect to birth during a clinical block.
- Facilitate informed decision-making for all potential recruits by providing pertinent information about case loading, with the guidance of and in the presence of the mentor, thus ensuring informed choice and consent.
- Gain consent from the woman to include them in the caseload and ensure this is documented in the woman’s Maternity notes.
- Reassure recruited woman that they may withdraw from the caseload at any time without giving any explanation. The woman should also be reassured that her care will not be affected or compromised in any way should this occur.

Maintaining professional relationships with case loading women and families

- All contact should be initiated through the woman’s community midwife or the co-ordinator of the birth or postnatal environment.
- There should be no unsupervised contact between the student and woman, including telephone conversations. Students need to ensure that they are supervised, either by their sign off mentor or another midwife, at all times. This also includes occasions were the student may be at the meeting point ahead of the mentor. The student needs to wait for the arrival of the mentor at all times, students should not enter a clients home without a qualified midwife being present.
- In order for the woman to be able to contact you with details of appointments it is suggested that you provide the woman with your university e mail address.
- In some situations women may develop complications and therefore require more intensive or specialist care. If the student feels able to continue with the case loading care of the woman and family they may do so but must seek additional avenues of support, this may include contacting your Supervisor of Midwives and personal tutor. Occasionally, circumstances may occur which
mean that the student must withdraw from care, please be advised by the mentor and/or personal tutor.

Availability

- The University’s covering letter contains details of the service offered and details of how and when they should contact the student via their named midwife or central contact point.
- Each student needs to individually negotiate their availability for women.
- The student needs to arrange antenatal and postnatal episodes of care during the practice placement. Intrapartum care episodes may occur at any time in theory or practice. The student must take responsibility for their own learning and make suitable arrangements with faculty staff to make up any theory time missed.
- Some labours can go on for a long time and the student needs to consider whether they are able to maintain professional behaviours should they become overtired or there are competing priorities. The safety of women and families are paramount. However, the student’s personal safety and security are also vitally important and each student will need to ensure that these are not compromised.

Record-keeping

It is essential that contemporaneous records are maintained and countersigned by a qualified midwife.

Within the portfolio the student should keep a separate reflective record of each caseload experience, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality at all times, in accordance with the NMC (2009). The records of visits and clinical experience profile entries should be countersigned by the supervising midwife. The student should NOT keep a separate record, detailing the woman’s history within the portfolio (NMC 2009). The reflective records constitute part of the portfolio and may be produced as evidence of achievement during the portfolio presentation for Professional Midwifery Practice Module in Session 6.
Learning from the experience

It is important to review and evaluate the effectiveness of all care given. Therefore students are asked to write a reflective account regarding one aspect of the caseloading experience. This reflective account must be in depth, utilise an appropriate reflective model and be referenced according to ARU guidelines. The aim of this reflection is to encourage students to consider the value of the experience of caseloading as a learning opportunity and the development of the autonomous practitioner.

Students may wish to consider the experience from their own perspective as a student or from the perspective of the woman and/or family under their care, particularly if you have been able to obtain parent feedback. The student may want to reflect upon a specific episode of care, a specific client, a specific challenge experienced within caseloading or any practical issues faced.

The reflective account should conclude with recommendations for continued professional development upon qualification. The reflective account should be an important part of your Year 3 portfolio presentation.
Dear Client,

This letter is to introduce your student midwife to you. Your student midwife needs to complete a caseload as part of her midwifery course. Caseload holding midwifery allows midwives to provide one to one care for women and their families throughout the full span of their pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal experience.

The student midwife has to recruit women and a family to her caseload and, under the direct supervision of a qualified midwife, carry out care for you and your baby during the pregnancy, labour and after the baby is born.

Feedback from women who have been in a student midwife’s caseload has been very positive, with women welcoming the opportunities for improved communication and continuity of care. As midwifery educators we believe that parent involvement in the course is vitally important to ensure that our course also meets the needs of women and families. Therefore there is the opportunity for you to provide some written feedback to the student using the form at the back of this document. Students really value any feedback that they are given as this provides an opportunity for them to reflect upon the effectiveness of the care they have given. The student will be able to submit your feedback as part of their portfolio of achievement in completion of their midwifery course so you would be making an important and valuable contribution to their success.

It is really important that you feel that you understand what caseload holding is and that you are able to give both the mentor and student consent for care in an informed way. Your student midwife will discuss with you the expectations of caseload holding in more detail but we want to reassure you that you may withdraw from this at any time without any explanation. Your withdrawal from the caseload will not mean that the care you receive will be affected or compromised in any way.

It is most important that all contact between yourself and the student midwife should be supervised. Therefore all contact should be initiated through your community
midwife or the co-ordinator of the birth or postnatal environment. This includes telephone conversations as well as face to face contact. Your personal safety and security are vitally important and we need to ensure that these are not compromised by care that is unsupervised by a qualified midwife. I also appreciate that there are different local arrangements for making antenatal appointments and that it would be helpful for the students if you were able to let them know of your planned visits. Thus we are also giving you details of the student’s University email account.

The contact details are below:

Community Midwife Name and Contact Details:

Student Midwife Name:

Student Midwife email:

Should you have any concerns at all about caseload holding or the care that you receive please do not hesitate to contact the Course Leader, Karen Bartholomew as below:

Karen Bartholomew  0845 196 4671
karen.bartholomew@anglia.ac.uk

Thank you so much for considering becoming one of the student midwife’s caseload.  I do hope that both you and the student find it a beneficial and rewarding experience.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Bartholomew
Acting Course Leader
BSc (Hons) Midwifery Course
Parent Feedback Form – Case loading

Student Name:

Feedback on caseload holding experience:

The most valuable part of the experience was:

Area’s that the student may develop further in the future:

Signature (optional) ………………………

Date …………………………………………
References


Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), 2009. Standards for Pre-registration Midwifery Registration. London: NMC.


