

With Women

A collection of
stories from
Black & Asian
Midwives

A book created by students
from Loreto High School working
with Student Midwives
and Midwives from
Manchester



Choosing a career in midwifery has been one of the most crucial decisions I have ever made. A decision that has influenced and fuelled my passion for women's and child health. A decision that has exposed me to the highs and lows of pregnancy, birth and parenting; a decision that has enabled me to contribute to the health of generations, by supporting women to make healthy life choices that influence the fetal environment in the womb. Midwives are in a unique and privileged position to be part of, what is for most, a miraculous, momentous, life changing event.

The richness of the experiences shared in this book are influenced by diverse and multicultural perspectives from midwives whose ethnic origins are from: Hong Kong, South Asia, Jamaica, England, China, India, Gujrat, Zimbabwe, Macau and Bangladesh.

Their stories will at the very least inspire and encourage you to choose a career in midwifery, or if you are already studying to be a midwife, you will be motivated to stick with it! If you are already a midwife, you will be reminded of the hard work and determination it takes to become a midwife and the significant contribution that cultural diversity brings to the profession and the lives of the diverse population we serve.

I am heartened by the passion and determination shared so candidly by midwives in the following pages and I am humbled and somewhat saddened by the challenges experienced by some, who share

their struggles to become the best midwife that they can be. These stories reflect, authentic, real life experiences and provide wise counsel and sound advice for you and so many others.

If you are thinking about choosing midwifery as a career, you will not be disappointed. You will embark on a journey that contributes significantly to the health and experiences of women, babies and their families during the pregnancy, birth and post-natal period. You will experience the emotional joys of excitement for new life and be part of supporting a family to transition into parenthood. You will also experience the very lows of loss and bereavement and your presence will be so important during those very challenging times. Midwifery career options are endless, and can include for example a role as a: clinical midwife in all settings, specialist midwife, clinical teacher, researcher, leader, manager, consultant midwife, midwifery lecturer, chief midwife, chief midwifery officer, strategist, policy lead, health promotor and so much more.

So now its over to you; read, reflect, discuss and act, the midwifery profession is waiting for you. All I ask is that you strive to be your best, do your best and always do what's right, wise advice that my parents gave to me.

Enjoy the journey

Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent OBE

Chief Midwifery Officer NHS England

Miya's story

Miya is an Indian-British senior midwife at St Mary's hospital. She moved from Wolverhampton to Manchester to pursue her dream of becoming a midwife. She attended the University of Salford to pursue a midwifery career where she was in the first cohort introduced to St Mary's Hospital.

There were multiple reasons why Miya wanted to study in Manchester,



which included knowing people who lived in Manchester, like her sister, who she could visit if needed. Additionally, Manchester's diverse and multicultural environment felt like a bigger version of home. One thing which consciously comes up is her ethnicity and religion, due to the population of people in Manchester people tend to think that because she is South Asian that she is Pakistani and Muslim. She states that her ethnicity sometimes worked in her favour as people feel more comfortable when they

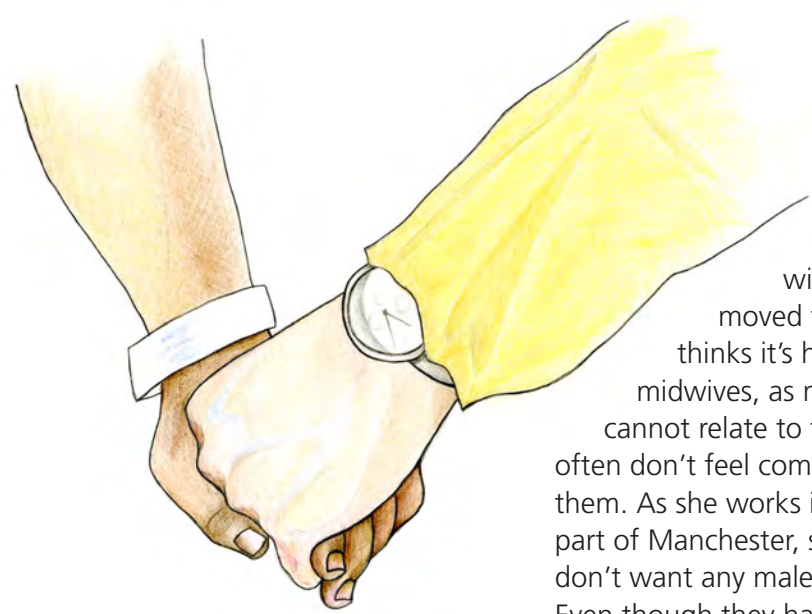
know you are from a similar background.

High school was where Miya first realised she wanted to pursue a career in Nursing and Midwifery. She found out she could do nursing and then do an 18-month course into midwifery. The course included a placement period, where Miya's first placement was with communities in South Manchester. She went out with the community midwives to Alexandra Park and Moss Side. These experiences were a pivotal

moment for Miya where she was able to witness the appreciation and love the community had for the midwives she was shadowing, which made

her understand and appreciate the important role midwives played in people lives. During her placement, Miya wanted to be like her community midwife mentor who was her inspiration as she knew all the names of everyone in the community and had their confidence in her.

Miya's family are very proud of her, her parent's even talk about her to their customers. A few years ago, the BBC filmed at St Mary's hospital and when she attended a family function everyone told her 'I



wife, but he moved to Spain. Miya thinks it's hard for male midwives, as many women cannot relate to them they often don't feel comfortable with them. As she works in a diverse part of Manchester, some women don't want any males around. Even though they have been through the exact same route as her, they get discriminated as midwives because of their gender. Miya would encourage males to become midwives because even though it's challenging, it's worth it. She states that you don't need to be a woman to be a midwife, just like how you don't need to have personally birthed a baby to be a midwife.

saw you on TV, you were amazing!' Although her family and friends are proud of her, many of them do not realise the intensity and effort that comes with being a midwife. For example, Miya explained how her brother did not realise the intensity and challenging nature of her work until his baby was induced. People tend not to know what midwives do and assume that the doctors deliver the baby, which isn't the case. Miya said as many people don't know what she does until they see it for themselves, it's hard for them to understand the difficulties she faces, such as giving terrible news to an unsuspecting family.

According to Miya, there aren't many male midwives. She currently works with 2 and when she first qualified there was 1 male mid

Miya's favourite part of being a midwife is supporting women and making a positive outcome. She said it's a truly joyful moment when you help birth a baby. The advice Miya would give to young people about becoming a midwife is to be prepared for challenges, as an 'autonomous practitioner you are going to be in charge of whatever you do'. ●

Priti's story

Priti Patel is an Indian-British midwife, her family are from Gujrat. Speaking about her culture, Priti states "I'm Hindu, that's my religion and my faith. In Hinduism there are a lot of gods and deities, so many that even I don't know all the names. I'm vegetarian, the results of my



culture and my belief in not killing animals. I go to the temple frequently, and my parents are more culturally strict and traditional. They've become less traditional and more westernised in their approaches and opinions." When talking about her nationality and some of the obstacles she faced, Priti explained to us that they were limited as she grew up in a diverse area where there was a large Hindu community. For Priti, midwifery was never on her radar as a profession, she

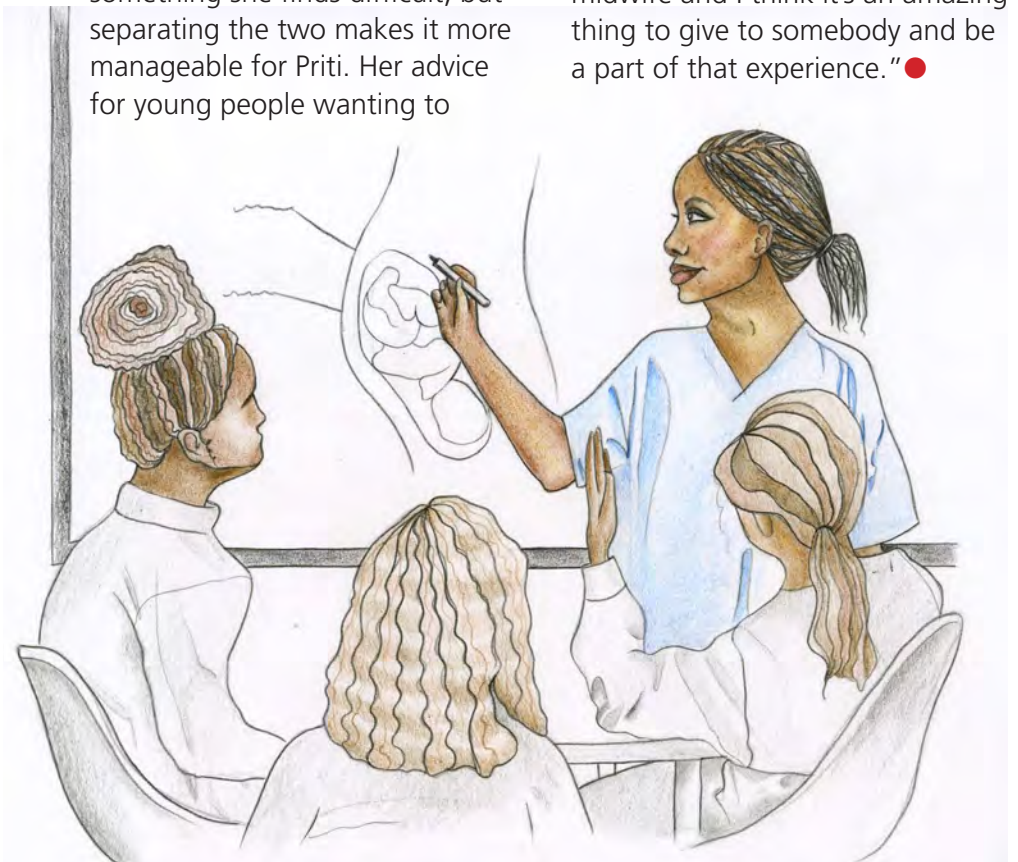
is the first person to be a midwife in her family. When she left school, she did not know what she wanted to do. Culturally she was encouraged to go into the profession of a lawyer or a doctor, but none of them interested her at the time. She eventually looked into science and ended up doing Biomedical science at University because she still didn't know what she wanted to do. It was a broad degree to do because it had a wide avenue of things you could go into afterwards. Priti ended up being a medical laboratory officer for about a year. Eventually she went to her careers advisor and explained that she wanted to work with people and be more active. Her advisor gave her two options: forensic science or a midwife. That was the first time she thought about midwifery.

During the interview, Priti told us that being a midwife has lived up to everything she thought it would be, and more. After training at the University of Manchester, Priti worked at St Mary's Hospital. She loved her time there and stated that had she not got married she would still be working there. After her wedding she moved to London in 2002 and worked in King George's Hospital, London and stayed there as a midwife.

Priti worked on a labour ward and then continued working there as a senior midwife until around 2009. Priti loved what she did, but got really frustrated that she couldn't make the changes that she wanted. She would sometimes do something and think this would work better if the system was like this. Priti soon found herself becoming a lecturer and then a senior lecturer and now the Lead Midwife for Education at London South Bank University.

Balancing midwifery as a mother is something she finds difficult, but separating the two makes it more manageable for Priti. Her advice for young people wanting to

become a midwife is "to really explore what the profession is, speak to people who are in the profession and think about what is driving you to become a midwife. If you like talking to people, you enjoy communicating, you enjoy giving a part of yourself to others to ensure they have a good experience, then this is a profession for you. It's not a profession where it's just about babies, it's about making a difference and women remember you for the rest of their life. Every woman will remember their midwife and I think it's an amazing thing to give to somebody and be a part of that experience." ●



Farhana's story

Farhana Faruque is a 34 year-old midwife from a Bangladeshi background who was born and raised in London. Her father came to England when he was young with her mother joining him after they were married. In the interview, Farhana explains how her South Asian heritage was both an obstacle and an inspiration when it came to her career in midwifery. Farhana's parents and her community understood very little about midwifery and therefore struggled to understand why she would choose to pursue it.

Ironically, Farhana's family was the reason she wanted to be a midwife. During the interview she explains that "there are currently 47 first cousins, I am one of the eldest". As the eldest she use to look after and spend a lot of time with the children of her family, which made her want to work in a job that revolved around children. Her encouragement for others also choosing to pursue midwifery, or any subject that their parents struggle to understand, is to ultimately be brave. During the



interview she explained what she meant by this; stating; "I decided, and I'm quite strong willed, that I wasn't going to be pushed into doing anything I didn't want to do".

On her journey to becoming a midwife, Farhana took the conventional route. She worked extremely hard during her GCSE's achieving between A*- C's and then went on to study A Level Biology,

Chemistry, Psychology and Maths. She later decided to take a gap year to do some research on her prospective course and went to open evenings. During this 'gap year' she also began working part-time and saved money to financially support herself during her time at University. In 2002 she applied for midwifery and later began her course at the University of Manchester.

For Farhana, university and moving away from home gave her the opportunity and freedom to develop and the chance to escape the responsibility often put on the eldest daughter of first-generation immigrant families. She spoke fondly about moving out and that although it was scary, it was something she enjoyed and does not regret.

Her course consisted of a lot of practical work and during her time at university she saw fifty-two babies being born – it was an exhilarating experience to be a part of this. It was a difficult balance to maintain at University but something that she thoroughly enjoyed. She explains that despite its hardships, midwifery is her life because 'the love and the compassion you feel for your job as a midwife, it just gets better and better

the whole time, you're in there'. At the core, midwifery is not just about birthing babies but being there for women, providing the emotional and physical support they need in such a delicate time in their life, and being there for them during the worst moments in their lives when the births and pregnancy have an unfortunate ending.



bangladesh

Farhana's advice for young people of colour wanting to pursue midwifery is that although you will face challenges, don't let that hold you back. Farhana explains how her differences, the fact that she is bilingual and from a South Asian background, helped her as it allowed her to understand and connect to other women in Britain that her other colleagues could not. It was a strength and although it might be seen as an obstacle, it is important to understand the power and doors your background gives you, and the help you can provide. As Farhana says: "If it doesn't upset anyone, you're not harming anyone, and you just want the best for your future, *break that barrier*"! ●

Zionna's story



Zionna was born in Manchester and raised in Moss Side. She is from a diverse background; Zionna is of English, Chinese and Jamaican descent. Her husband is Gambian and they have three children between them. Explaining her educational experience, Zionna stated that her time in education was difficult because her school was underfunded and did not have the means to support its students, and that affected her academic experi-

ence at school. By the time Zionna was 15, she knew she wanted to be a nurse. Zionna had a difficult time at school, as she did not have the relevant support from school and the environment at home to properly succeed, and as a result did not pass her GCSE's. However, this never stopped Zionna. Zionna studied an Access course at Manchester College and attended the University of Salford. Her journey took a while and was unique as

Zionna herself was a mother. At the age of sixteen she had a son, who is now 17. That experience, and a miscarriage, solidified her choice that she wanted more than anything to be a midwife. During her time at Salford, Zionna stayed at home as she was married



and had two children. Her time at home was difficult, she was in an abusive relationship for eleven years with her now ex-husband who did not want her to become a midwife. The traumatic experience led to her failing her first year. However, despite this and all of the challenges that Zionna faced, she always managed to succeed and, after leaving him, she graduated with a first-class degree.

After university, Zionna was the only Black Midwife in the hospital where she first worked. 80 people applied for her role, and she was the only one who got the job. This created a lot of friction. It was very old-fashioned when she started out in midwifery 12 years ago, and there were comments about the 'black midwife who had an attitude problem'. Although she

was very well liked, she admitted people had some stereotypes about her because of her race and it bothered her. Zionna explained how the racism she experienced did not affect her too much, because she had experienced something similar when studying at university. Despite the racism she faced Zionna, notes that being a woman of colour makes her job easier as it allows her to connect with so many women from so many backgrounds, and she is grateful for this.



Zionna's favourite part of being a midwife is looking after the women

– she looks after around 100 women in her caseload. Zionna sees them as her friends, they all know about her kids, they live in the same area, they all know she works on a Thursday, and they will go to her if they need something. The advice Zionna would give to younger people on becoming a midwife is if you really want it, go for it and work really hard. It doesn't matter if you haven't got your GCSE's and your friends have. 'Be determined and don't let anybody put you off!'. ●

Shirley's story

Shirley is a Black-British Midwife. Shirley was born and raised in Sheffield to Jamaican parents who arrived during the 1960's, and were an essential part of Britain's mission to rebuild the British economy. Her father had worked at a steel firm and her mother worked in a hospital. Shirley came from a family where a lot of the women worked as midwives and nurses. During the interview, she mentioned how her grandmother had a remarkable number of children, 16 in total and afterwards became a local midwife helping women in her area to birth babies. Her aunty is also a lecturer in London in Midwifery and her niece is a community midwife in London. Shirley never faced any obstacles from her family when it came to pursue higher education or going into midwifery. However, Shirley's life was not free from obstacles as she faced a lot of racial abuse and maltreatment. Growing up in a



council estate in Sheffield, Shirley and her family were one of the very few Black families in the area. Her family and other Black families were severely racially abused, her windows were smashed, dog faeces were smeared on their door and in general, Shirley stated "they just gave us hell". As a young child her experience in the education system was one that replicated her experience in her council estate. As an infant she was racially abused and the teachers ignored it as she continued to be severely racially bullied by her classmates, "Life was difficult in the 70's and 80's for a black person on a rough White estate in Sheffield." Shirley reminded us during the interview that "Being Black and British, you felt like you always had to prove yourself, so that's an obstacle you always have to face no matter what profession". However, this just made Shirley more determined to succeed, but she states at the same time "it's sad that you have to feel like you have to defend who you are, being victimised by the colour of the skin. That kind of thing doesn't happen in the same way it used to, but under the current climate I don't want that to happen to people today". Shirley's path to midwifery, although not tradi-

tional, was unexpected. She was one of 8 and one of the eldest and therefore spent a lot of the time looking after her younger siblings. She always loved caring for people, supporting them and knew regardless of what she did at University, she would find a career where she could do that. Although she studied Economics and Social History at the University of Manchester, Shirley eventually started her midwifery education at Stepping Hill hospital, and after she had her son, finished her education at St Mary's Hospital. Shirley enjoyed her time as a student midwife. The thing she loves the most about being a midwife is that she can help women to feel that they're in control of their bodies and their decisions. Shirley says "I like to see women feeling confident". Her advice to young people wanting to pursue midwifery is to do your research, figure out what it is that you like about midwifery, when you do go on to study midwifery, work hard, be determined. Being a midwife is difficult, especially as a mother. Shirley finds her life to sometimes "feel like a juggling act". But she



states that it is rewarding. She makes time for her children, and her children see the impact that she's had on the community, and appreciate her efforts. Through her work ethic and advice, Shirley reminds us that it is a balance between consistency, hard work and being kind to yourself. ●

Silvia's story

Silvia was the first person in her family to attend university. She was born in Macau but raised in Stoke-on-Trent. Macau is a country that a lot of people know very little about, it has both Portuguese and Chinese influences as it used to belong to the former, but now has been returned to the latter. As a result, Silvia's upbringing was infused with a lot of Portuguese and Chinese traditions. She and her family celebrate Catholic and Chinese traditions as they both hold equal importance. Family values and unity is something that

is very dear to Silvia's heart and extremely important in her culture. In her culture respecting

your elders is extremely important, for example when her Dad has a doctor's appointment, the whole family sits in the reception to provide him with moral support.

Silvia speaks English and Cantonese. At home her parents emphasised the importance of being proud of and remembering your origin. They therefore made a rule that the children were not allowed

to speak English at home to help encourage them not to lose their native language. Silvia now has a daughter who is half English and half Chinese, and she is going to encourage her to learn both traditions in a similar way.

For Silvia growing up in Stoke-on-Trent was very difficult at times. She was the first ever Oriental girl in her primary school and also throughout high school, college and university. This made Silvia feel like she was on her own and affected her confidence at that time. She stated throughout her childhood she hated being Chinese. Like many young people of colour, all she wanted was to fit in, especially as people used to bully her because she looked and spoke differently to them. As she grew up Silvia faced a lot of adversaries during her time as a nurse and while pursuing midwifery. Sometimes people would assume she was a different ethnicity such as Filipino because of her profession and say extremely xenophobic and racist things such as "do you eat snakes?" and other insensitive and prejudiced comments. When she moved to Manchester however things began to look up as she was surrounded by a more diverse group and met her mentor Ching, which made Silvia happy as it was the first time she that felt she was not alone.

Silvia took an untraditional, unexpected career choice from her family and wanted to become a midwife.

At the age of 15, Silvia knew she wanted to work in a profession that focused on children. She studied child development at GCSE and wanted to be a teacher but when her Mum was pregnant she came across the role of midwifery. Most of her extended family don't live in the UK, and within the Chinese community young people are expected to study business or tourism related courses.

In the Macanese community the younger people who have studied automatically become the translator. Whilst translating for a family friend during childbirth, this reaffirmed Silvia's passion to become a midwife. She applied to

8 different universities and didn't get in, and then she went through the nursing route at Keele University, finishing in 2007. Silvia never gave up on her dream to become a midwife. She worked as a surgical gynaecology nurse so she could gain experience to prepare her for midwifery. Silvia eventually studied Midwifery at Salford University.

Silvia now supports student midwives, teaches qualified midwives, as well as working as a midwife on a labour ward. Silvia thinks that she has a unique and beautiful job and is very grateful she gets to do this for a living. Midwifery has been such a significant aspect of Silvia's life that she expresses how she would love for her daughter to be a midwife, stating; "even though I know it's hard and it's very emotionally stressful as it's not always a happy job, there are times when

it's sad, such as when we are supporting a Mum who has suffered a loss, but it's the most rewarding job I have ever had".

For Silvia being a midwife is more than just a job, it's her identity. Her advice for working midwives is to believe that it is doable, to be disciplined and to try your hardest. Because it is worth it. ●



macao



Ching's story

Ching was born in Cleethorpes, England to parents who were born and raised in Hong Kong and was one of five children. When she was growing up her parents instilled a lot of Chinese traditions into her such as cooking traditional Chinese food, being respectful to your elders and the importance of being helpful towards each other. They also taught her to have a strong work ethic, encouraging her to study and work hard. Although Ching experienced racism and challenges because of her ethnicity growing up, she did not allow this to be an obstacle for her and continued to pursue her goal of becoming a midwife.

When asked during the interview what inspired her to become a midwife, Ching said it was something she had always wanted to do – to become a nurse and then a midwife. She had always been an empathetic child with the desire to care for others. When she enquired about nursing and received brochures with more information, she also received a midwifery brochure where a woman of Asian descent was pictured holding a

baby, which seeing the visible representation also encouraged and inspired her to pursue this career. Although her parents were worried about the excessive workload that came with being a nurse, they soon understood her passion for this career and supported her choice. Ching said pursuing this



career felt like she broke a barrier, which was also shown through the acceptance from her mum towards her younger sister entering the nursing profession too.

Her journey into midwifery began at the age of 18 when she first moved to Manchester to study nursing at The University of Manchester, which was scary at first, but the diversity and inclusivity of the city made it easier to adjust. Upon completing her nursing, after 5 years she then went for an interview at Manchester's School of Midwifery before being accepted onto the course. This course was 18 months long and



was a mix of theory and practical work, where the practical took place at St Mary's Hospital. Ching explained they had a competency book where the students would have to tick through when they had studied or completed experiences such as antenatal, postnatal and delivery, with delivery involving birthing 40 babies.

When Ching leaves work, she still thinks about the woman she's looked after, for example she has thoughts such as whether the woman she was looking after is still in labour or if the baby is okay. St Mary's Hospital is busy so Ching finds her job can be difficult to disengage from at times, resulting in her bringing work home. To combat this she tries to make time to relax, such as through meeting friends, family and going out to different

places as well as making sure to go on holiday. For Ching, being a midwife is rewarding especially because you are looking after a woman who is having a hard time physically and emotionally. Reminiscing about her time as midwife, Ching tells the story of the first birth she ever saw where the woman in labour broke her front tooth whilst breathing on gas and air. For students who want to pursue midwifery, Ching's advice is simple; "you've got to work hard, and you've got to go with the flow, you get thrown all sorts and sometimes you might feel like it's stressful and you're struggling. You might feel like you're not getting your deliveries when you're on placement, but you do in the end and the midwives will always support students who start their career in midwifery, you'll always get help." ●

Jessica's story

Jessica was born and raised by her grandparents in Jamaica until she was 12, later moving to Bolton to live with her parents. Her transition to England was one that was quite seamless, as she had cousins and extended family to make the transition easier for her. Jessica grew up being very familiar with nursing and midwifery as a lot of her cousins were in that profession and she was greatly inspired by them. Her journey to midwifery started with her studying science in college and a pre-nursing course to see if nursing was for her. That



was the first time she was personally exposed to the 'ins and outs' of nursing.

Before becoming a midwife, Jessica trained and later qualified as a nurse. She moved from Bolton to Manchester, and although it was scary as she was only 18, moving for her was a good experience. She met a lot of other students from across the North West, she tells us during the interview that "we gelled very well, supported each other, studied together and we are still friends now". After qualifying as a nurse and working on a medical and surgical ward, Jessica chose to do another course, as she was still eager to learn and decided to choose midwifery. It was an 18-month conversion course as she was

already a nurse. Although it was quite an intense course, she really enjoyed it, especially the community work involved.

Being a mother, Jessica understands how difficult it is balancing your job. When her daughter was younger she was more anxious than the average Mum

and was worried about how she'd be able to juggle things. Jessica tells us that she was reassured because she had learnt that there are various schemes on the NHS to support Mums such as part-time working and childcare. In general, even without a child, Jessica admits that separating your work life from your personal life is hard. A lot of it, she admits, is essentially discipline. She tells us that you have to be stern with yourself and say, "my shift is finished, I need to go home for myself for my family".

For Jessica, midwifery is something that is deeply rewarding, it is about putting someone else first, making them the priority and helping them during a hard but beautiful moment in their life. Although topics, like abortion, are controversial in religious Jamaican communities, Jessica tells us; "I think personally, women and their families have choices and we have to respect that. We have a lot of women who get pregnant and are unable to keep their babies. We get a counsellor to look at different options, maybe adoption or a family member looking after a child. Within the NHS there are a number of conscientious objectors so, if assisting a termination is not something you want to do, you



can be exempt from it. But I think, if you are going to go into the profession, you should be thinking of that woman and the family". Moreover, when speaking about how her ethnicity, race and religion plays a role in her job, Jessica tells us that being a Black woman in midwifery she finds a lot of patients finding comfort in her; "at St Mary's we have a lot of black women from Africa and the West Indies, who do not have very good knowledge of the system and how to access care, or issues with asylum seeking and accessing care. They migrate to me". From her interview it is clear that the role that Jessica plays is essential, her background allows many fragile patients to find peace and comfort in her presence and allows them to build trust with those who are trying to help them. Her advice to students is to try hard, understand your abilities – do not underestimate yourself and to dedicate some time researching about midwifery. ●

Vimbai's story

Vimbai was born in Zimbabwe and came to the UK when she was eleven years old. During the interview she explained to us that the transition to moving to England was not too difficult. The process took her some time to adapt and get comfortable with, but the fact that there were a lot of similarities between Zimbabwe and Britain (as Zimbabwe was once a British colony) made the transition a lot easier for her. Today, Vimbai is a soon-to-be-mother, and a midwife from Manchester. Her job currently focuses on a group of girls



that are nineteen years of age and younger, helping them during their pregnancy and life afterwards. It is a part of her job that Vimbai thoroughly enjoys. She gets to spend more time with and help a particularly vulnerable group, offer them guidance and provide some peace during a time that can be scary for them.

Vimbai started her journey to become a midwife by firstly taking some time to explore her options. She explained to us that she did not realise she wanted to be a midwife until she was twenty years old, and before that all she knew was that she had a desire to work in health care. Work experience and volunteering played a key role in helping her choose the career she wanted, and this led her to midwifery. Vimbai volunteered on a medical ward in Manchester and eventually completed work experience on a maternity ward in Tanzania.

The deciding factor for her when it came to choosing midwifery came down to the happiness and joy that came with the job. Vimbai explains 'you got a happy outcome, you got to look after women who were going through a really hard time and you got to bring something really good out of that experience'. The path to midwifery was made even smoother for her because midwifery was something that was well-received, it was an honourable thing in Zimbabwe and a lot of African community and cultures. She explained that "culturally, before you had midwife as a title, you had 'wise women' in the village, I'm talking



way, way back, but you'd have the wise women who would birth babies and stuff', so as a professional midwife she was seen as a woman who had great knowledge and a high position in her community. In fact, when she went back to Zimbabwe a year ago, Vimbai received a lot of positive reactions.

Although she took a couple of years out of school, Vimbai completed the traditional method. She did A-levels, specifically Maths, Biology and Chemistry, because she knew she wanted to work in the health sector and that she would need those A-levels. Then she applied to the University of Manchester to do midwifery when she was 21.

The course was extremely practical as a lot of the time students were on placement. She explained that it was challenging, it was hard

work because 'you have a deadline and a shift on at the same time'. Her time at university was an eye-opener for her because before this her school experience was very academic. She revised and had exams and it was not something that was particularly practical, but with midwifery it was different. Vimbai met women during the most exciting and difficult periods of their lives, helped them and experienced a unique form of joy with them. For Vimbai, her first birth was something that she remembers well. Taking a trip down memory lane, she describes how she was so nervous, had sweaty palms and was scared when it was happening. She began to feel relaxed because she had her mentor who helped her and guided her. The experience was something that stayed with her. In the interview she stated that she carries the women and their experience with her wherever she goes "and even if years later they don't remember you, you will always remember them, and that period forever".

According to Vimbai, many student midwives and nurses share a similar student experience because there are certain things and experiences they may want, but end up missing them because they're a

student midwife. They don't go to fresher's fairs and the parties, for example. She explains that as a student midwife, it's like having a full-time job, you have to think about the sacrifices and the outcome. However, the silver-lining she explains is that all the student midwives are going through the same thing, so you do end up making a little network, your own little family. For Vimbai she describes her experiences with her fellow students as a "kind of bond together because it's this world that no one else really gets to know, you go through such crazy experiences together".

During her time at University, Vimbai made the decision to move out, a decision that is quite common for students who go to university in cities that they are from. For her the experience living away from home was a positive one, she gained a level of independence that she did not have before and gained friendships with people who were going through the same thing. Additionally, it made it easier for her to commute to her placement because she can choose where to live based on her placement, making the transition to a student midwife a lot easier for her.



zimbabwe

As someone who has been doing the job for almost three years, her advice for aspiring midwives is to do your research, there is no such thing as too much research, speak to midwives and if you can, get some clinical work. However, her most important advice is to make sure midwifery is something that excites you, something that you love, because as Vimbai emphasizes "with midwifery there's no middle part, you either love it or you don't".

In the future, Vimbai would love to teach midwifery too, mostly because she would love for students from a similar background to see that this can be a reality for them too. In the interview she stated that "When I was a student I didn't see a lot of people who looked like me" so it'd be nice to be someone who people can look at and say "oh, she went to my school or she looks like me or she's where I'm from, and she's now doing this". ●

***This book is in gratitude and in memory
of all Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic health
professionals during the coronavirus
pandemic of 2020-21.***

We would like to thank all the Midwives who gave up their time to be interviewed and share with us their stories.

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Design: Stephen Raw and James Walmsley

Project Directors: Catherine Millan, Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Officer University of Manchester; Kathy Murphy, Director of Nursing and Midwifery St Mary's Hospital, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust; Dr Christine Furber, Reader in Midwifery University of Manchester

***If you have been inspired by this book and want to know more
about becoming a midwife please look at these websites***

NHS careers website

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/midwifery>

RCM website

<https://www.rcm.org.uk/promoting/learning-careers/become-a-midwife/>

University of Manchester

<https://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/2021/11660/bmidwif-midwifery/careers/>



Ahmed Iqbal Ullah
Education Trust