

## A day in the life of an Independent Midwife .....

Where to start? Every day is different, so I'm going to give you a flavour of the sort of things I get up to.

Of course I have antenatal appointments; from the first tentative telephone enquiry I then arrange to meet up with a potential client (usually for an hour or so) so that we can discuss their past experiences, their hopes for this pregnancy, their concerns and most importantly so that they can get a "feel" as to whether they actually like and trust me. Once a couple have decided to book me as their midwife I then usually give all their antenatal care in their own home (although I have done antenatal visits in The Bank of England medical room!). The format of visits is that I carry out all the usual blood tests, urine and blood pressure checks, but also leave a lot of time for discussion so that over the course of the pregnancy we cover issues such as waterbirth, Vitamin K, when to call me and so on.

My clients come from a wide area – I am happy to take clients on who live within approximately an hour's radius of Milton Keynes – so I do spend a fair bit of time driving, as well as liaising with G.P.'s and hospitals where necessary.

Four times a year I organise an Antenatal Exhibition, this is an opportunity for pregnant couples to gather information about breastfeeding, pregnancy yoga, cloth nappies and the like. I also organise Birth Preparation Workshops and am often to be found at the Community Desk in Central Milton Keynes on hand to speak to expectant parents and also regularly attend Study Day's and midwifery meetings to ensure that I keep myself up-to-date with current research.

Obviously I spend much of my time being "on-call" for births. My own family are now pretty much grown-up and the commitment isn't as big as one might imagine as I rarely have more than two births during a month – it is important that I don't over-commit myself as the whole point of what I do is that I guarantee to be there for the birth. Babies don't always read the text books though! I have had three births in one week, as of course some babies do come early and some come late! As you will appreciate, the birth is the big event, and it can on occasion go on for some time.

Baby being here doesn't mean that my job ends! In fact, postnatal visiting is often one of the busiest times as the family may need quite a lot of support in the early days. The majority of my clients choose to give birth at home; however some either need to, or choose to give birth in hospital.

I visit my clients for up to four weeks postnatally and it is a joy to see the baby thriving and although discharging clients is always tinged with sadness it is also great to know that I have played a part in helping the family on to the next stage of their life. (I do usually keep in touch, perhaps not as often as I would like, but I often get e-mails and photographs and usually pop in when I'm passing!).

I am always happy to discuss anything that you are concerned about; please do feel free to call.

Valerie Gommon RM  
Independent Midwife