The Five Facts You Should Know About UK Bullying in Midwifery – And What To Do About Them

1. Bullying in Midwifery Is More Common Than in Other Areas of the NHS

28% of midwives experience bullying as opposed to 20% of other NHS professionals. In one study 36% of students said they had been bullied.

Just knowing this figure means you’ll be on the look out to care for yourself, students and staff. It might sound not that nice but if you’re prepared, you can recognise moments of bullying and address them.

Small moments of confidence can head bullying off and mean it never becomes a problem between you and the person who would have been a bully. It takes practice but you’re powerful.

For a brilliant step by step guide on how to practice this confidence and what to say in the moment, see the book ‘Free Yourself from Workplace Bullying’ by Aryanne Oade

2. There Is No One Definition of Bullying in Midwifery

This makes research hard. But a lot of it comes down to how you’re being made to feel. If it’s regular, you’re feeling attacked, you’re feeling your reputation or self confidence is being eroded, it’s bullying.

Keeping notes with times, dates and names is important to keep track and to show yourself you’re not making it up, there really is a problem. Recording with a phone ap
as you talk through the events can be a great way of recording things, especially if you’re tired and just off shift.

**3. You Have the Right to a Grievance Procedure**

This is true regardless of whether you’re a student, newly qualified or very qualified midwife.

If you are a union member, your union is able to give you support and advice. You can also ask managers to follow the NHS grievance procedures: [http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:OKAyUVTkhikj:www.nhsemployers.org/~/media/Employers/Publications/Bullying%2520and%2520harassment.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:OKAyUVTkhikj:www.nhsemployers.org/~/media/Employers/Publications/Bullying%2520and%2520harassment.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk)

In a bullying culture it’s hard to know if this is the best course of action. If you have others who are also being bullied, it is possible to do this collectively for safety in numbers.

The National Bullying Helpline number is here: Tel: 0845 22 55 787

They do have a record of helping NHS staff. Or just if you need someone to talk with to get things clear in your head before you act.

Online support can also be found in the ‘Say No To Bullying In Midwifery’ Facebook group: [https://www.facebook.com/groups/saynotobullyinginmidwifery/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/saynotobullyinginmidwifery/)

**4. It’s Not You**

So many excellent midwives I know have been bullied. It’s a product of the culture and it’s awful but it’s nothing to do with you.

Keep your passion and desire for change, care for yourself as much as possible and surround yourself with those who care.

The social worker/researcher Brené Brown suggests that you have a small piece of paper you keep with you. On this piece of paper are names are of loved ones that you know judge you fairly, with knowledge of your personal values and capabilities.

If you experience bullying, when you have a moment, look at your list. I had no idea how effective this was until I tried it. Humans need belonging and bullying makes you feel like you don’t belong, so this is a powerful antidote. It’s like taking friends and family with you into work.
5. It’s Not Anyone’s Fault

The NHS has a hierarchy system that worked well in terms of getting the health of the nation addressed. It’s a factory based model and many lives have been saved or transformed by how efficiently large numbers of patients can be given vaccines, screened for diseases or given life saving antibiotics.

But it’s time to move on from this model now. It’s too impersonal. Hierarchies mean that there is ‘excessive deference’ where students or junior staff don’t speak up. This is dangerous. Also, people at the bottom of the hierarchy are vulnerable to being bullied because of the difference in power.

We all behave badly when under stress and in the wrong conditions. Many people have a ‘fight’ reaction which can lead to name calling, criticism, etc.

The odds are the vast majority of midwives who behave badly towards others step out of the situation feeling sorry, guilty and ashamed, even if these feelings are very repressed. This is sad for everyone and if we can provide change and a culture shift, it will give them the platform of self respect needed to change this behaviour.

After all many of these midwives are hugely experienced and it’s tragic their skills and knowledge aren’t being passed on because of bullying behaviour.

Attending the ‘Bullying in Midwifery’ conference will give you tools and insights to stand up for yourself so these midwives are no longer in a situation where they find themselves bullying.

Find out more here:

This isn’t just a conference...

Be a part of the first Midwife Diaries ‘Conference’
30th September | Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge

http://www.midwifediaries.com/stop-bullying-in-midwifery