Fit for Practice in the Genetics/Genomics Era: a revised competence based framework for midwifery education and training  
(Overview)  

Emma Tonkin, Heather Skirton and Maggie Kirk  June 2012

This framework sets out the minimum level of competence required by UK midwives at the point of registration. Developed through consensus, it builds upon the original framework set out in 2003 (Kirk et al.). This revision will ensure that the woman and her partner remain at the centre of care both now and in the future.

Why the review?  
Midwifery education and training must reflect the changing face of healthcare. Our knowledge and understanding of genetics and genomics has grown significantly and its translation into healthcare continues. As such, it was felt timely to undertake this review and as a result, explicit guidance for the midwifery profession in relation to genetics / genomics will be available to educators and practitioners.

The approach  
The project team convened a national meeting involving midwives in practice and management, educators and policy makers. Attendees reviewed stories from individuals, family members and health professionals that illustrated a range of experiences and conditions. Five key themes (see figure) were used to prompt discussion and participants considered two questions: What are the woman’s needs? (to include family members and carers) and What does the midwife need to know, think and do in order to meet those needs?

Resulting statements were mapped to the original framework to identify gaps and areas requiring updating. Changes were made to the original competences reflecting the discussion on the day and this new framework has been endorsed by the meeting participants.

Outcomes of the review  
Revisions were made to all of the original statements. In particular, competence 1 now reflects the need to include family history information as part of a comprehensive midwifery assessment and competence 6 actively emphasises the responsibility of midwives to remain current in their own sphere of practice. In addition, the time critical nature of information giving, decision making, testing and referral has been emphasised within competences 1 and 5.

In addition to the new framework the team is working to develop associated learning outcomes and practice indicators and provide signposting to quality resources that can be integrated into degree level, midwifery training programmes without putting significant additional pressure onto curricula. This information will be made available during 2012. A separate review has been undertaken for the nursing profession and the wording of both frameworks harmonised to ensure consistency².

For further information please contact: Emma Tonkin etonkin@glam.ac.uk +44(0)1443483156


### Midwifery competences in genetics/genomics: revised framework 2012

1. **Identify individuals who might benefit from genetic services and/or information through a comprehensive midwifery assessment:**
   - that recognises the importance of family history in assessing predisposition to disease,
   - recognising the key indicators of a potential genetic condition,
   - taking appropriate and timely action to seek assistance from and refer individuals to genetics specialists, other specialists and peer support resources,
   - based on an understanding of the care pathways that incorporate genetics services and information, and by
   - providing continuity of care and being proactive in co-ordinating care within the multidisciplinary team as appropriate.

2. **Demonstrate the importance of sensitivity in tailoring genetic/genomic information and services to the individual’s culture, knowledge, language ability and developmental stage:**
   - listening to and acknowledging an individual’s prior experience,
   - recognising that ethnicity, culture, religion, ethical perspectives and developmental stage may influence the individual’s ability to utilise information and services,
   - demonstrating the use of appropriate communication skills in relation to the individual’s level of understanding of genetic/genomic issues.

3. **Advocate for the rights of all individuals to informed decision making and voluntary action:**
   - based on an awareness of the potential for misuse of human genetic/genomic information,
   - understanding the importance of delivering genetic/genomic information and counselling accurately and without coercion or personal bias,
   - being responsive to changing needs throughout the period of care,
   - providing support during periods of uncertainty,
   - recognising that choices and actions may differ with each pregnancy, and
   - recognising that personal values beliefs of self and individuals may influence the care and support provided during decision-making.

4. **Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the role of genetic/genomic and other factors in maintaining health and in the manifestation, modification and prevention of disease expression, to underpin effective practice:**
   - which include core genetic/genomic concepts that form a sufficient knowledge base for understanding the implications of specific conditions that may be encountered.

5. **Apply knowledge and understanding of the utility and limitations of genetic/genomic information and testing to underpin care and support for women and families prior to, during and following decision-making, that:**
   - incorporates awareness of the ethical, legal and social issues related to testing, recording, sharing and storage of genetic/genomic information,
   - incorporates awareness of the potential physical, emotional, psychological and social consequences of genetic/genomic information for individuals, family members, and communities, and
   - recognises that decision-making and testing during pregnancy is usually time-critical.

6. **Examine one’s own competence of practice on a regular basis:**
   - recognising areas where professional development related to genetics/genomics would be beneficial,
   - maintaining awareness of clinical developments in genetics/genomics that are likely to be of most relevance to maternal and family health, seeking further information on a case-by-case basis,
   - based on an understanding of the boundaries of one’s professional role in the referral, provision or follow-up to genetics services.

7. **Obtain and communicate credible, current information about genetics/genomics, for self, women, families and colleagues:**
   - using information technologies and other information sources effectively to do so,
   - applying critical appraisal skills to assess the quality of information accessed,
   - listening to and working in partnership with family members and other agencies in the management of conditions, and
   - recognising the potential expertise of individuals, family members and carers with genetic/genomic healthcare needs that develops over time and with experience.