

# What is the role of the midwifery link lecturer?

An action research project  
by Joy Kemp, Honorary Senior  
Lecturer





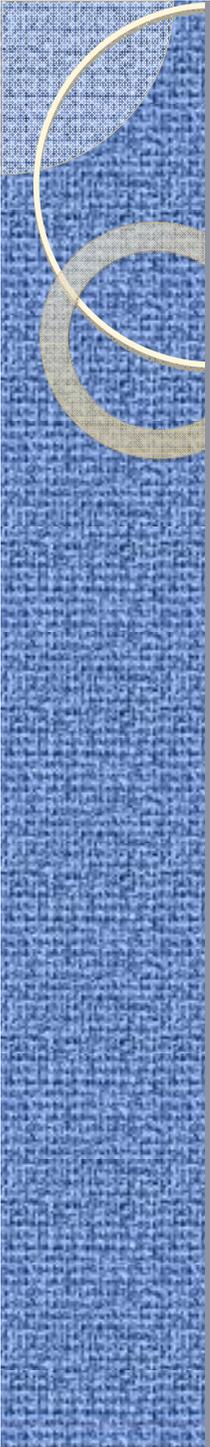
# Background

- CCCU (2008) ‘facilitate effective link activities in practice settings’
- Lack of consensus about the role, poorly defined (Brown, 2005; Barrett, 2007)
- New role at Link Site – different University
- Confusion with other roles (PFE, LPs)
- Learning communities project
- What is the essence of the midwifery LL role at CCCU?



# Action research

- Insider research (Stringer, 1999) - participatory
- Fits with midwifery: research *with*, not research on (Barrett, 2006); unpredictability and complexity of practice (Deery, 2005)
- 2 action/reflection cycles
- Work in progress – to be developed



# Data Collection & Analysis

- Semi structured taped interviews with 2 experienced lecturers (4 invited, 2 declined)
- Interview guide – input from team
- Ethics issues
- Qualitative analysis: Coding, categories, core themes
- Completed December 2008

# Data Analysis

<p><b>She's there</b></p> <p>Relationship building - with anxiety</p> <p>Confidentiality, industry managers, issues</p> <p>Midwives, students measure, early quality</p> <p>importance of personal interest - history</p> <p>None of all have a relationship with the</p> <p>industry</p> <p>Flexibility</p> <p>Credibility</p> <p>Listening</p> <p>Valuing people</p> <p>What you do rather than what you say</p> <p>Demonstrating that you value people</p> <p>Value people and they will value you</p> <p>Standing up to the plate</p> <p>Valuing the mentor's assistance and</p> <p>judgment</p> <p>Believing in mentors</p> <p>Being trusted</p> <p>Mentors aren't good at falling, falling students</p> <p>It's a time when you stand up to the plate as a</p> <p>link lecturer - that mentor has to believe that</p> <p>you believe in that judgment. If you later at</p> <p>that moment they will meet trust you again</p> <p>Mentor - the mentors have to believe you will</p> <p>support them through their mentorship, that</p> <p>you will stand up with them and address these</p> <p>problems</p> <p>Student's advocate?</p> <p>Playing different roles sometimes you have to</p> <p>play a role that you feel you don't need for</p> <p>Promoting education and employability</p> <p>The multi-faceted role of the mentor</p> <p>Women <b>being the best</b> to advocate - if the</p> <p>student is not doing the best by women and the</p> <p>mentor you would advocate</p> <p>Student - defending students when</p> <p>disempowered</p> <p>Service</p>	<p>Building relationships</p> <p>Inter-professional</p> <p>between midwives</p> <p>Midwives seen as being the most important</p> <p>relationship</p> <p>Purpose of relationships</p> <p>How people judge or perceive lecturers</p> <p>Value of the role to the midwife mentor</p> <p>Trust in mentors - standing up to the plate</p> <p>Being trusted and trusting others</p> <p>Pride in role</p> <p>Acceptation if it done well</p> <p>Involving team in questions</p> <p>Trying to forward</p> <p>Developing a base for future work</p> <p>No set agenda</p> <p>Role difficult to articulate</p> <p>Advocating self - have got a right</p> <p>One lecturer that on becoming the role, I work</p> <p>less up there, I'm being taken away</p> <p>Multi-faceted advocacy role - trilogy of events</p> <p>Delicate balance</p> <p>Advocating for others</p> <p>Multi-faceted advocacy role - trilogy of events</p> <p>Delicate balance</p> <p>Rolling up my sleeves</p> <p>To pass up on your sleeves and wash up the</p> <p>code of conduct on the CTO</p> <p>I worry that I'm becoming less visible, I work less</p> <p>up there, I'm being taken away</p> <p>One of the senior midwives described me as</p> <p>being an old fashioned link lecturer - you know,</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>Mentor - the mentors have to believe you will</p> <p>support them through their mentorship, that</p> <p>you will stand up with them and address those</p> <p>problems</p> <p>They (mentors) don't think I'm there for the</p> <p>students, they think I'm there for them - and to</p> <p>me that's really important</p> <p>We have to protect mentors as much as we do</p> <p>the students - I truly believe that, I might be</p> <p>wrong!</p> <p>It's a balancing role, hugely, delicately balanced</p> <p>The balance is delicate and you don't always get</p> <p>it right</p> <p>It pays to have a coffee with a manager, but you</p> <p>might think 'I could do without this, this is a</p> <p>waste of time'</p> <p>It pays to spend some time sitting chatting with</p> <p>a student, or to say 'let me show you how to do</p> <p>this' - that's never a waste of time</p> <p>Sometimes you think 'you should know that by</p> <p>now'</p> <p>You need to be able to relate to the person</p> <p>in different units with different cultures, and to</p> <p>develop your own credibility</p> <p>If I know the mentor has flagged up an issue, I</p> <p>might say 'tell me what you were doing today, or</p> <p>what is it you've got going on'</p> <p>Supervisor of midwives - combining workshops</p> <p>eg on portfolio development with supervision</p> <p>(another lecturer not interviewed is an ALSO</p> <p>instructor)</p> <p>Each unit has its own needs and cultures - I've</p> <p>learned that since I've become a supervisor of</p> <p>midwives</p> <p>Different pathways may have different needs</p> <p><b>How do you decide</b></p> <p>1. 'How do you decide how you are going to</p> <p>spend your day?'</p> <p>H: 'I don't, very rarely. It's a suck it and see</p> <p>experience'</p> <p>Sometimes I look in</p> <p>Drop in</p> <p>Portfolio day - every 6 weeks - responding to</p> <p>need. We named it a portfolio day but actually</p> <p>they come in for all different reasons</p> <p>Activities evolved</p> <p>portfolio development</p> <p>Other times I go there, it's quiet, they like to see</p>	<p>Similarities with the work of animators in</p> <p>community development (Smith, 1999)</p> <p>Combined roles - adding value to the role of LL</p> <p>Different units have different needs</p> <p>Time planning, approach to the role</p> <p>Working nature of student's career</p> <p>Benefits of having some structured time but</p> <p>being flexible</p> <p>Valuing - being seen</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>Flexibility</p> <p>Ability of LL with personal life</p> <p>More done. Completed first delivery there,</p> <p>Shared house down and moved</p> <p>Acceptance of the lecturer</p> <p>They do my workshops, people that I've shared</p> <p>lots of time and things with. You can't ever see</p> <p>them, they will not attend you, you just do it one</p> <p>time</p> <p>You have to build trust - credibility, visibility - all</p> <p>these sorts of things</p> <p>They know me, they trust me, it's safe with our</p>	<p>The importance of history and context with</p> <p>lecturers</p> <p>Primary the work - geospatial - what causes</p> <p>change to look at a service - spatial causes</p> <p>the</p> <p>importance of history and the context of what</p> <p>you're doing in the environment of the</p> <p>importance of role</p> <p>if it's a job done well - starting point for study</p> <p>Action research - participatory</p> <p>Developing a base for future work</p> <p>No set agenda</p> <p>Role difficult to articulate</p> <p>Advocating self - have got a right</p> <p>One lecturer that on becoming the role, I work</p> <p>less up there, I'm being taken away</p> <p>Multi-faceted advocacy role - trilogy of events</p> <p>Delicate balance</p> <p>Advocating for others</p> <p>Multi-faceted advocacy role - trilogy of events</p> <p>Delicate balance</p> <p>Rolling up my sleeves</p> <p>To pass up on your sleeves and wash up the</p> <p>code of conduct on the CTO</p> <p>I worry that I'm becoming less visible, I work less</p> <p>up there, I'm being taken away</p> <p>One of the senior midwives described me as</p> <p>being an old fashioned link lecturer - you know,</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>as a catalyst for action</p> <p>People would see us sitting there with coffee</p> <p>and chatting, and they'd say 'Oh, can we just ask</p> <p>you about...?' - and so we've evolved it.</p> <p>Last time we didn't have any students of junior</p> <p>midwives, but actually the senior midwives who</p> <p>were doing their MScs... and we talked about</p> <p>essays. That was fine you know, because we it</p> <p>met somebody's need. You have to have that</p> <p>flexibility that you can recall and discuss that</p> <p>information at any time'</p> <p>structured activities need to be</p> <p>flexible</p> <p>No structured activities for students at present,</p> <p>more ad-hoc - but open to change.</p> <p>'Today that's not how I do it'</p> <p>They just want to say to you 'hello, yes</p> <p>everything is OK'</p> <p>Sharing a link area</p> <p>The importance of communication - sharing a</p> <p>cohort, meet every couple of weeks</p> <p>Defining boundaries - let one lecturer deal with</p> <p>one issue, steering clear, picking different days</p> <p>Unofficial hierarchy of LLs - who has been there</p> <p>longer, has built up trust, is known</p> <p>'I now just cannot do the things I used to do'</p> <p>Collaboration - til for lat. Exchanging teaching</p> <p>Promoting collaboration</p>	<p>What do students want from the link lecturer?</p> <p>Flexibility</p> <p>Friendliness</p> <p>Challenges of sharing an area and also having a</p> <p>very time consuming role in the University</p> <p>Conflict with other activities.</p> <p>Promoting collaboration</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

A large board covered in numerous yellow sticky notes, organized into clusters. The notes contain various terms and phrases related to the data analysis, such as 'Credibility', 'Flexibility', 'Listening', 'Valuing people', 'Trust in mentors', 'Being trusted', 'Advocating for others', 'Multi-faceted advocacy role', 'Delicate balance', 'Rolling up my sleeves', 'To pass up on your sleeves and wash up the code of conduct on the CTO', 'I worry that I'm becoming less visible, I work less up there, I'm being taken away', 'One of the senior midwives described me as being an old fashioned link lecturer - you know,'.

A board with a grid layout, divided into several sections: 'FOCUS', 'CHALLENGES', 'MENTORS EVALUATING', 'THE WAY FORWARD', 'ACTIVITIES', 'SKILLS QUALITIES ATTRIBUTES', and 'BALANCING ROLES'. Each section contains multiple sticky notes with handwritten text, providing a structured overview of the data analysis findings.

# Theme 1: the nature of the role

## 'Getting it right and giving the best you can'

- 1. Who does the role serve?
  - *'Perhaps it doesn't need to be for the student, maybe the focus of the student and the teacher – that bond – is wrong... (it's) more about the facilitation of the experience rather than the people who are experiencing it (Jane, p.10)'*
- 2. Modelling collaboration: bringing people together, catalysts for action
  - *'I see my role as fundamental, building relationships between the university and the placement area' (Mary, p. 13a).*
  - Many other relationships too
  - Clearly defined boundaries

3. Credibility and visibility:  
being current, being there •



Being there: essential to the role but difficult to achieve.

*'For me it's essential... being credible ... if they see we are current in practice...it reinforces practice and develops midwives and enables them... I am very motivated, I go to practice in my own time which is essential' (Mary, p.28a).*

## 4. Purposeful chatting: intentional time wasting

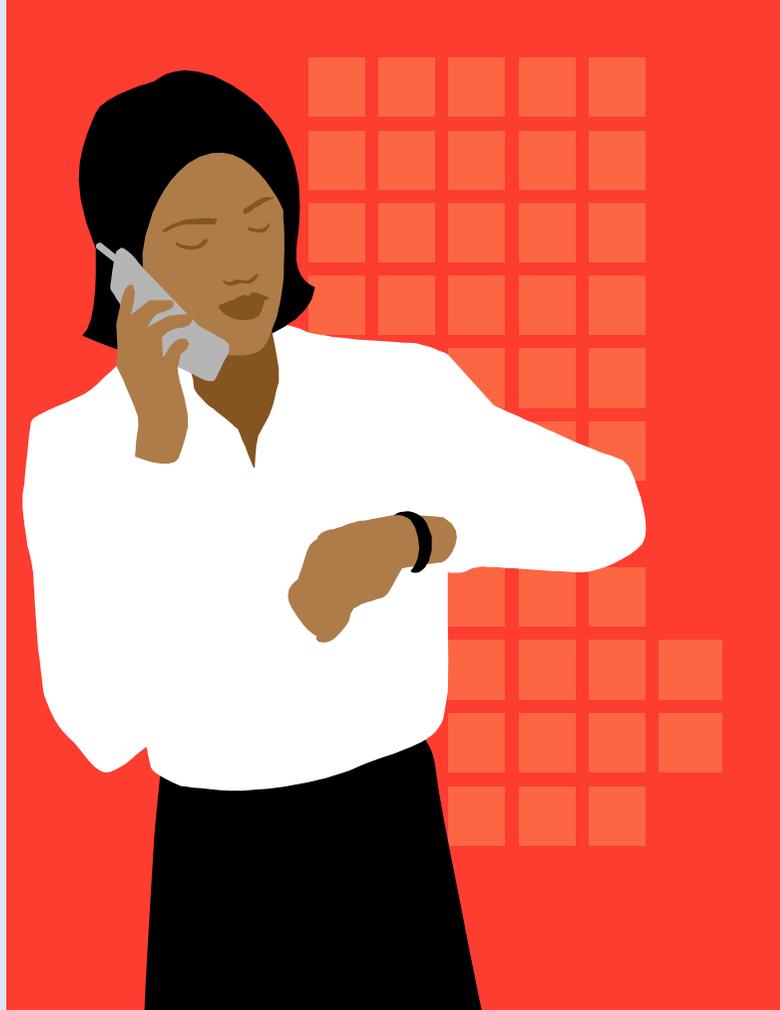
An investment which pays dividends

*'It's a bank account... it's investing to get the interest. It's something you have to work for. You have to demonstrate that you value them and you have to do something to make them understand that' (Jane, p. 18).*



- Activities are a response to stated needs and depends on what people want
  - *It's a suck it and see experience (Jane, p.5).*

# Theme 2: Challenges and difficulties

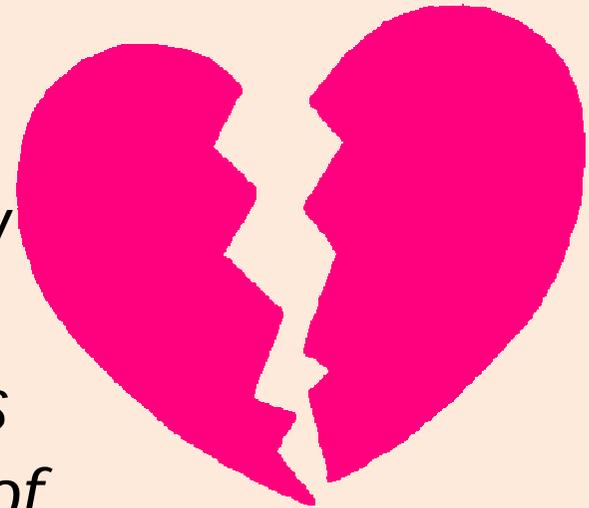


## 1. Lack of time

- *The timing for my link role is never enough – I think I always give more to my link role than I should be doing – but unfortunately that’s what I need to do, it’s what the role demands – you want to give the best you can (Mary, p. 14a).*

- 2. Fragmented thinking

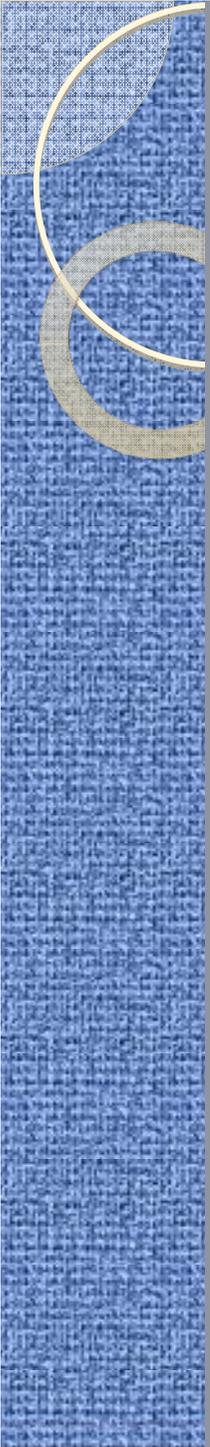
- *'I think it's very interesting the way that we are different in the two places... the link areas belong to us as individuals. I think the essence of our team is wonderful but ... people do things subconsciously'. (Jane, p. 21).*



The degree of autonomy and belongingness demonstrated in the link lecturer role indicate personal empowerment (Matthews et al, 2006). Is that true in the University setting?

### 3. No mechanism for feedback or evaluation

- ▶ Not captured in student's practice evaluations
- ▶ Team's belief that this role functions well but no evidence for it
  - *if we say that we do this well, then we need the evidence for that... that (feedback) should come from everybody we have contact with (Mary, p. 17a)*
- ▶ Concerns about another paper exercise



## Theme 3: Future possibilities

- Feeding into curriculum redesign
  - *With this revalidation we should be changing the focus of the way we teach; this is our opportunity to propose a new way of working. It's about being creative isn't it, and challenging the way that we work (Jane, p.17).*
  - *We need to increase hours for practice time. I would like to see one whole week in practice – they can see you out there and it ensures the theory practice gap becomes smaller (Mary, p.27a).*
- the role needs more recognition and more time given to its implementation.



# Discussion

- ***Link lecturers as community animators*** – a role model for learning communities within the faculty and for interprofessional working and collaboration
- Fits with NMC (2008) teacher standard
  - *‘teachers must be able to establish effective working relationships in practice and academic settings, create an environment for learning, act as role model and show leadership’.*



# Role modelling 'being with'

- 'being' as well as 'doing' is an important aspect of midwifery (Walsh, 2006).
- Ontology, or the nature of being, could be a helpful model for midwifery work.
- Link lecturers play an important part in role modelling this less tangible aspect of practice.

# Belonging in practice

- Both participants demonstrated belongingness
- Belonging as a link lecturer can take 7 years! (Ramage, 2004)
- Need to consider student's belongingness and factors that influence this
- The importance of clinical credibility – must it have to be achieved before addressing other issues? (Ramage, 2004). Debate about this in the literature

# Conclusions and Way forward

- Complex, organic role
- Powerful model for interprofessional collaboration
- Relies on sense of belonging
- Credibility and visibility in practice
- Facilitates empowerment for lecturers and others
- Our purple cow?
- Students and practitioner's views
- Extend beyond our HEI
- Fed into MINT Project (Midwives in Teaching) report about to be published (Nottingham Uni)

# Thank you for listening!

Further Details:

Joy Kemp

Honorary Senior Lecturer  
Canterbury Christ Church  
University, Kent

[joy.kemp@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:joy.kemp@canterbury.ac.uk)



Canterbury  
Christ Church  
University