

Pro-Chancellor

Sheena Byrom is one of the UK's most experienced midwives and she is passionate about promoting and protecting midwifery practice. She is an accomplished academic and author, and has served on a number of national strategic groups including the government's Midwifery 2020 Steering Group, and the NICE Guideline Development Group for postnatal care.

Sheena is the youngest of five daughters and freely admits she struggled with academic subjects. After securing a place at grammar school to study her A-levels, she was forced to quit her studies and start working owing to her parents' serious ill health. Following a spell working as a trainee dispenser for Boots chemist, Sheena was successful in obtaining a place to train as a state registered nurse.

During a three-month placement in obstetrics, Sheena first realised her interest in midwifery. She was lucky to be invited to help 'catch' a baby – something other student nurses at the time would rarely get the chance to do.

Sheena has continuously sought to improve systems for midwifery practice and in 2002 became one of the country's first consultant midwives. This gave her the authority and freedom to lead a number of projects in the Lancashire area. These included opening three midwife-led birthing centres, and creating a forum theatre group that helped expectant mothers from vulnerable groups.

Sheena's character was tested in the 1990's when unforeseeable complications with a birth resulted in a child being born with significant disabilities. The serious investigation and press intrusion which followed were extremely challenging for the family of the child and for Sheena. She was helped through those difficult times by the messages of support she received from the mothers she had cared for and from her peers.

In 2003, Sheena achieved an MA in Midwifery Studies from the University of Central Lancashire. She is a Board Member and Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Midwives and published her memoirs, entitled 'Catching Babies' in 2011. In the same year, Sheena was awarded an OBE for services to midwifery. Being a pioneer, she was short-listed as the Nursing Times 'Nurse Tweeter of the Year' in 2014.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Sheena Byrom OBE, and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Education, *honoris causa*.