

Gill Walton - Citation – 2022

Pro Chancellor

As Chief Executive of the Royal College of Midwives, Gill Walton is a passionate advocate for the difference that midwives make for women and families during maternity care.

Gill's 40-year career, which she refers to as a climbing frame rather than a ladder, has been driven by a natural tendency to question the status quo. Gill reflects that this desire to question began as a child, when she realised that her school's approach to debating was little more than telling each side what they should say. Determined to follow her own path, Gill left school at 16 to study at a local college before starting her training as a nurse.

At that time there was no direct route to train as a midwife, but Gill was inspired to specialise after hearing how a group of pregnant women and mothers had chained themselves to the railings of a London hospital in protest against medicalised births. Gill felt that the medicalisation of a natural life process, without choice, was inherently wrong and started out on a mission to ensure that women were empowered to make the right decisions for themselves and their babies.

As Gill's career progressed, she became one of the first midwives to complete a BSc in Nursing and Midwifery; a move which enabled her to bring a new research and evidence-based approach to clinical practice. She went on to lead maternity services across London and the south of England before joining the Royal College of Midwives as Chief Executive in 2017. Earlier this year she was appointed a CBE for services to midwifery.

In addition to representing the college's 50,000 members and influencing national policy, Gill is most proud of her work to unite all those working in and around maternity care to improve services for women. Her advice to those starting out in their careers is to keep asking questions and, above all, to enjoy the privilege of being involved at the start of a new life and family.

Pro Chancellor. I have the honour to present Gill Walton and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Education, *honoris causa*.

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