Royal College of Midwives

Chief Operating Officer

Applicant pack

A message from Gill Walton, Chief Executive

Thank you for your interest in becoming Chief Operating Officer of the Royal College of Midwives.

This is an important appointment for the RCM at a significant point in our development. We are the professional association and trade union for midwives and maternity support workers across the UK, by the side of our members throughout their careers. Our strategy is guided and shaped by our members, and our mission is to improve their working lives, amplify their voices and build our midwifery community.

Over recent years, we have made real progress. We have strengthened our voice and influence, developed our role as a professional association and trade union, and brought the organisation closer together as One RCM. We are proud of the role we play for midwives, student midwives, maternity support workers and maternity care assistants, and of the contribution we make to improving maternity services across the UK.

We are now ready for the next stage of that journey.

To deliver well for members in an increasingly complex and demanding environment, we need to continue strengthening the business engine that sits behind our purpose. That means developing our financial planning and commercial decision-making, making better use of data and insight, improving CRM and digital capability, strengthening governance and compliance, and ensuring that our teams have the systems, confidence and accountability to deliver consistently well.

The incoming COO will be central to this work. Working closely with me, the Executive Team, the Board and colleagues across the four nations, they will help translate strategy into practical delivery, build strong organisational disciplines and create the conditions in which our people can do their best work for members.

This is a broad and influential role. It requires someone who can combine strategic perspective with operational grip, and who understands that good operations are not separate from member impact, they enable it. The successful candidate will help us become more resilient, more financially sustainable, more data-led and more joined-up, while keeping our values and our members at the heart of every decision.

We are looking for an experienced, values-led and collaborative leader. You do not need to have worked in an organisation exactly like the RCM, but you will need the curiosity, judgement and humility to understand our unique role as a professional association, trade union and membership body. You will also need the experience and confidence to build trust quickly, diagnose what needs to change and lead improvement through others.

If you are motivated by helping a values-led organisation strengthen its foundations so it can have even greater impact for members and the wider maternity community, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Gill Walton
Chief Executive, Chief Midwife and General Secretary
The Royal College of Midwives

About the Royal College of Midwives

The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) is the UK's only membership organisation, professional association and trade union dedicated to midwives and the wider maternity team. We represent and support 50,000 midwives, student midwives and maternity support workers, bringing together the largest and strongest maternity organisation of its kind in the world.

For over 140 years, we have stood alongside the people who make maternity care possible. Today, our members work across every part of the UK, supporting women, birthing people, babies and families at some of the most important moments in their lives.

Our role is both professional and collective. We provide members with workplace advice, representation and practical support, alongside professional guidance, learning, research and opportunities to develop throughout their careers. We champion high-quality maternity services and professional standards, while using the experience and expertise of our members to influence governments, employers and decision-makers.

This is a particularly important time for the RCM and the communities we serve. Maternity services across the UK face sustained pressure, including workforce shortages, unequal outcomes and concerns about safety, culture and investment. Our members need a strong, credible and responsive organisation that understands their working lives, stands up for their interests and helps shape a better future for maternity care.

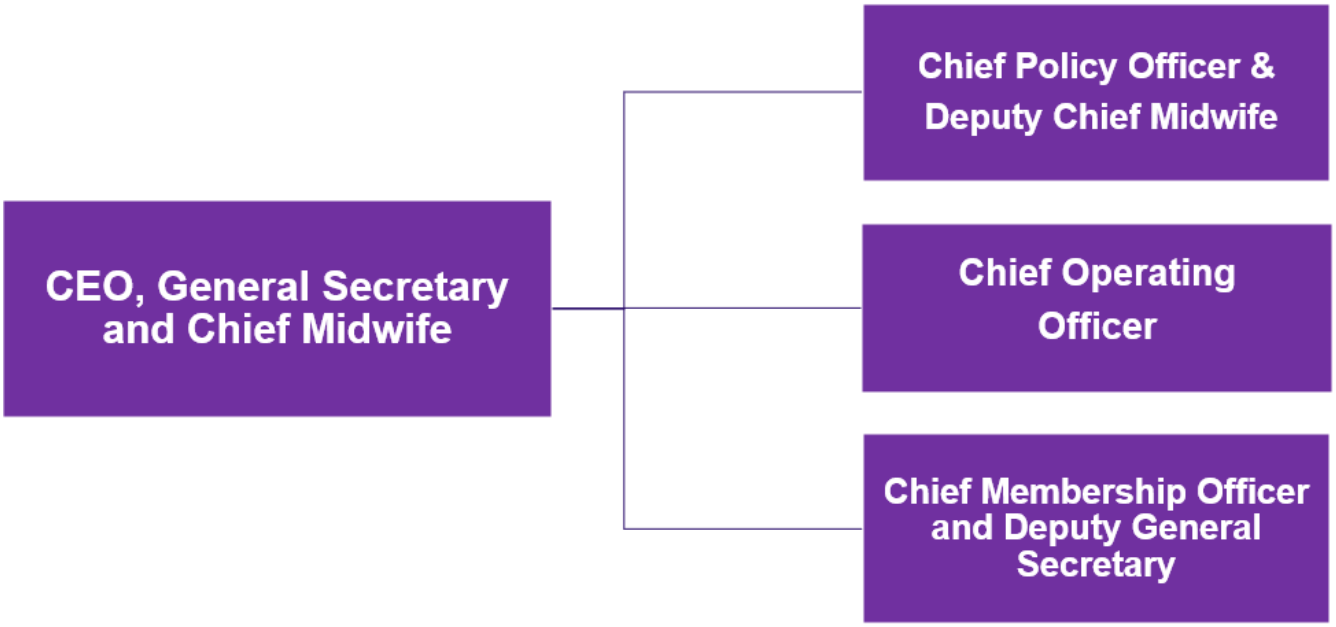
We are proud of our history, but firmly focused on what comes next. We want to listen more closely, work more inclusively and ensure that the RCM has the people, systems and organisational strength to deliver lasting value for its members and positive change for maternity services.

Find out more:

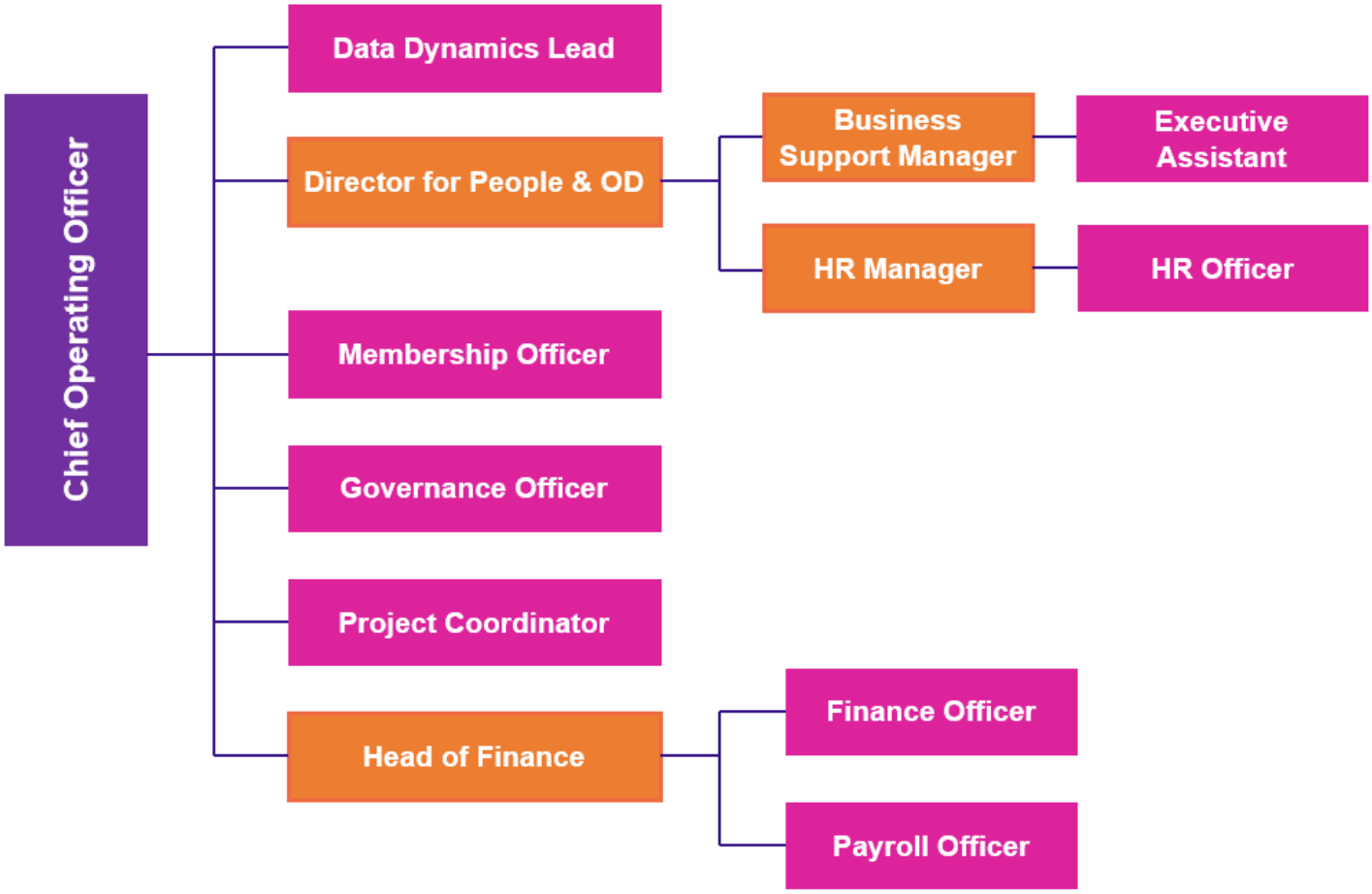
- Our website
- RCM Strategy
- Annual Report and Financial Statements – For the year ended 31 December 2024
- Our values & behaviours

Structure chart

Senior Leadership Team



Business support team



Job description

Role: Chief Operating Officer
Reports to: Chief Executive Officer
Location: Hybrid, with travel to London and across the UK as required (London, SE1 1SZ)
Contract: Permanent, full-time
Salary: £104,635, plus London weighting of £5,215 *(London weighting allowance if eligible)*
Benefits: The full list of benefits can be found below

Role purpose | The Chief Operating Officer (COO) will provide UK-wide corporate leadership for the RCM, ensuring that our strategy is translated into disciplined, inclusive and measurable delivery. The COO will strengthen the organisation's business infrastructure, financial sustainability, operational performance, governance, digital and data capability, and member-focused service delivery. They will ensure that the RCM operates as One RCM, with clear accountability, effective systems, strong cross-functional working and a shared focus on members.

The COO will work closely with the Chief Executive, Executive Team, Board, Senior Leadership Team and Business team to build an organisation that is resilient, well governed, financially sustainable and able to respond effectively to the needs of members and the wider maternity environment. The COO reports to the Chief Executive and will deputise when required, including acting in the Chief Executive role where necessary and within their area of expertise.

Organisational context | The RCM is both a professional association and a trade union. We provide professional leadership, representation, advocacy, community and practical support for midwives, student midwives, maternity support workers and maternity care assistants across the UK. Our work is shaped by members and focused on improving working lives, amplifying members' voices and building the midwifery community.

Over recent years, the RCM has made significant progress in strengthening our Executive and Senior Leadership structures and bringing together our professional association, trade union, membership and business functions behind a shared purpose. The next COO will build on that progress by helping the organisation further professionalise its business infrastructure and deepen the ways in which teams work together.

This will include strengthening financial planning and commercial discipline, improving the use of data and CRM, supporting better governance and compliance, developing organisational capability and ensuring that operational delivery enables the RCM's strategic priorities.

Success measures | The COO will be expected to demonstrate progress against the following areas:

- Clearer translation of strategy into operational delivery.
- Stronger financial management, forecasting, budget ownership and value for money.
- Improved use of data, CRM and insight to support member engagement and decision-making.
- Greater confidence in governance, compliance, risk management and internal controls.
- Improved organisational performance, accountability and efficiency.
- Stronger business team capability and clearer ways of working.
- Better cross-functional collaboration and reduced silo working.
- High-quality member and stakeholder experience.
- Successful delivery of transformation and improvement initiatives.
- Trusted relationships with the Chief Executive, Executive Team, Board and colleagues across the four nations.

Key responsibilities

A. Strategic leadership and delivery

- Translate the RCM's strategic objectives into clear, deliverable operational plans, with systems and processes that support effective delivery.
- Lead delivery of the corporate business plan, ensuring that measurable outcomes are achieved.
- Provide the operating architecture that connects strategy, directorate priorities, team plans and individual contribution.
- Support the organisation to work as One RCM, with shared ownership, clear accountability and strong cross-team communication.
- Ensure alignment and cohesion across UK-wide, regional and devolved nation operations.
- Contribute actively to corporate strategy as a member of the Executive Team, with collective responsibility for organisational decisions.
- Role model a collaborative, values-led and member-focused culture.

B. Financial and commercial leadership

- Lead and oversee financial planning and operational budget management, working effectively with internal colleagues and outsourced finance support.
- Strengthen financial controls, forecasting, reporting and budget ownership across the organisation.
- Ensure that financial information and analysis actively support strategic decision-making, investment choices and long-term sustainability.
- Support the RCM to understand the financial implications of membership recruitment, retention, density, engagement and service delivery.
- Ensure value for money across operational activity, contracts, procurement and supplier relationships.
- Oversee procurement, supplier relationships and contract management.
- Ensure commercial activities support and align with organisational objectives.
- Identify, develop and manage business development and income-generation opportunities where appropriate.

C. Operational performance and efficiency

- Lead operational functions to deliver high-quality, efficient and member-focused services.
- Develop a clearer business operating model, ensuring that roles, responsibilities, processes and decision-making routes are well understood.
- Establish and monitor meaningful KPIs to drive accountability, performance and continuous improvement.
- Ensure appropriate organisational infrastructure, systems and processes are in place to support effective delivery.
- Identify where capability, systems or processes need to improve, and lead change in a way that builds trust and confidence.
- Embed a culture of continuous improvement, service excellence and practical follow-through.
- Ensure that operational decisions are grounded in what members experience and need, not activity alone.

D. Governance, risk and compliance

- Ensure robust governance arrangements across all operational areas.
- Strengthen internal governance disciplines, ensuring Board and Committee processes are well supported, decisions are followed through and organisational risks are visible, understood and managed.
- Lead the organisation's risk management framework, ensuring risks are proactively identified, managed and reported.

- Ensure compliance with legal, regulatory and organisational requirements.
- Ensure strong business continuity plans and processes are in place and regularly reviewed.
- Act as Data Protection Officer and ensure adherence to all relevant data protection legislation.
- Ensure effective management of contracts, outsourced services, agreements, leases, estates and other arrangements supporting successful delivery of RCM services.
- Support future governance development, including any review of rules, delegations or decision-making arrangements.

E. Digital, data and transformation

- Lead the organisation's digital and IT strategy to support operational effectiveness and member experience.
- Improve CRM, data quality, reporting and insight so the RCM can better understand member behaviour, engagement, recruitment, retention and service needs.
- Champion the use of data, insight and analytics to inform decision-making.
- Move the organisation towards clearer, evidence-informed planning and performance management.
- Sponsor and lead transformation programmes and organisational-change initiatives.
- Drive innovation and modernisation across systems, processes and ways of working.
- Ensure that digital and data improvements are practical, accessible and aligned with the needs of staff and members.

F. People and leadership

- Provide strong, visible leadership to the RCM's business team, fostering a high-performing, inclusive and accountable culture.
- Develop the capability, confidence and accountability of the business team, addressing performance, structure and ways of working where required.
- Ensure effective workforce planning, capability development and performance management across relevant areas.
- Build leadership capacity across the organisation and support the development of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Work collaboratively with Executive colleagues to ensure that operational improvement supports the whole organisation.
- Role model the values and behaviours of the RCM.
- Build trust with colleagues by combining strategic clarity with attention to operational detail.

G. Stakeholder engagement and representation

- Build effective relationships with internal and external stakeholders.
- Build trusted relationships with an elected member Board, supporting strong governance while recognising the RCM's democratic and member-led character.
- Ensure the RCM maintains a strong reputation as a professional body and trade union.
- Represent the organisation externally as required.
- Support the Chief Executive in stakeholder and partnership engagement.
- Communicate complex operational, financial, governance and risk information clearly and confidently to different audiences.

Initial leadership priorities

In the first 12 months, the COO will be expected to:

- Develop a clear understanding of the RCM's operating model, business infrastructure, risks, strengths and areas for improvement.
- Build confidence in financial planning, budget ownership, commercial decision-making and long-term sustainability.
- Improve the use of data, CRM and insight to support member recruitment, retention, engagement, service delivery and strategic decision-making.
- Strengthen governance, compliance, risk management and internal controls.
- Develop clearer systems, processes, roles and accountabilities across the business functions.
- Support the development of One RCM by improving cross-functional working.
- Build trusted relationships with the Chief Executive, Executive Team, Board, Senior Leadership Team and colleagues across the four nations.
- Lead change in a way that is practical, inclusive and confidence-building.
- Develop the capability, performance and accountability of the business team.
- Ensure that operational priorities are clearly connected to member experience and the RCM Strategy.

Person specification

The person we are looking for

- The RCM is looking for an experienced, values-led and collaborative organisational leader who can strengthen the business infrastructure behind our purpose.
- The successful candidate will bring strategic perspective, operational grip, financial and commercial awareness, and the ability to lead change through people.
- They will understand that the RCM's operational effectiveness is central to its ability to improve members' working lives, amplify their voices and build the midwifery community.
- They do not need to have worked in an organisation exactly like the RCM, but they will need the judgement, curiosity and humility to understand a distinctive professional association, trade union and membership body.
- They will also need the experience to build confidence quickly and help the organisation become more financially resilient, data-led, well governed and joined up.

Leadership and behavioural attributes

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate:

- Strategic thinking, with the ability to translate vision into practical delivery.
- Strong operational grip, with the ability to understand detail without losing sight of the bigger picture.
- A values-led, collegiate and collaborative leadership style.
- The ability to build trust quickly with the Chief Executive, Executive Team, Board, Senior Leadership Team and staff.
- Emotional intelligence, humility and curiosity when joining a distinctive organisation.
- Confidence to bring constructive challenge and make difficult decisions where needed.
- Resilience and adaptability in complex and demanding environments.
- A practical, improvement-focused approach to change.
- The ability to work across organisational boundaries and prevent siloed ways of working.
- Commitment to inclusion, fairness, belonging and member-focused delivery.
- A leadership style that is grounded, credible and personable, rather than overly corporate or directive.

Role-specific skills and capabilities

Candidates will need to demonstrate:

- Strong financial literacy and experience using financial information to support strategic planning, investment decisions, sustainability and value for money.
- Strong analytical capability, with the ability to interpret complex information and turn it into clear decisions and action.
- Experience improving business infrastructure, systems, processes or organisational performance.
- Experience improving data, CRM, reporting or insight capability to support better organisational decisions, service design or member/customer engagement.
- Strong programme, project and transformation leadership capability.
- Experience of governance, risk, compliance and internal controls.
- Excellent communication and influencing skills, including at Board level.
- Ability to present complex operational, financial, governance and risk information clearly and confidently.
- Strong stakeholder management skills.
- Ability to balance strategic leadership with hands-on operational understanding.
- Ability to lead through others, rather than personally becoming the technical expert in every area of the portfolio.
- Good digital confidence and understanding of how technology and data can improve organisational effectiveness.

Experience

Candidates should bring:

- Significant senior leadership experience in a COO, Deputy CEO, Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Resources or similarly broad organisational leadership role.
- Experience leading multi-functional teams within a complex organisation.
- Proven experience of strengthening organisational performance, business infrastructure, systems, processes or ways of working.
- Strong financial and commercial management experience.
- Experience of using financial, performance and operational information to improve organisational decision-making.
- A track record of delivering organisational strategy, transformation or continuous improvement.

- Experience of governance and risk management in regulated, member-led, charitable, public benefit or similarly accountable environments.
- Experience of working effectively with Boards, Committees or elected/non-executive governance.
- Experience building credibility with senior stakeholders and supporting good governance without losing trust.
- Experience leading change in a way that builds confidence, accountability and engagement.
- Experience within a membership organisation, professional body and/or trade union would be desirable.
- Alternatively, strong experience in a representative, regulated, member/customer-led or values-led organisation with comparable governance and stakeholder complexity would be welcomed.
- Understanding of the UK healthcare and maternity services landscape would be desirable.
- Experience of operating across the four nations, regions or a distributed UK-wide structure would be advantageous.

Education and qualifications

Candidates should bring:

- Degree-level qualification or equivalent relevant experience.
- Evidence of ongoing, relevant continuing professional development.

The following would be desirable but are not essential:

- A postgraduate qualification in a relevant area.
- An appropriate accountancy qualification, such as ACA, ACCA, CIMA or CIPFA.
- Relevant governance, risk, data, digital, transformation, business or leadership qualifications.

Values alignment

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate how their leadership approach reflects the RCM values.

we are committed to **excellence** through **collaboration** with a **member focus**

Benefits

Summary

The package combines generous annual leave, extensive flexibility and hybrid working, enhanced family-friendly provisions, comprehensive wellbeing support, and dedicated professional development funding. These benefits compare favourably with many not-for-profit and membership-sector executive packages and are likely to be particularly attractive to candidates seeking both impact and work-life balance.

Annual Leave and Flexibility

- **30 days annual leave** plus public holidays.
- Additional **RCM closure days over the Christmas/New Year period**, providing extended time off without using annual leave.
- Strong commitment to **flexible and hybrid working**, with autonomy to work between home, office and other locations as required.
- Full-time working week of **35 hours**.

Financial Benefits

- **A defined benefit pension scheme**
  - Employee contribution: 7%
  - Employer contribution: 9.42%
  - Death in service benefits included
  - Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) available for enhanced retirement savings.

- **Access to financial wellbeing support** through Quilter Financial Services, including professional financial advice and educational resources.

- **Interest-free loans**
  - Annual season ticket loans
  - Up to £10,000 interest-free car loan where role requirements apply.

Family-Friendly Provisions

- Enhanced maternity, adoption, paternity and shared parental leave and pay arrangements.
- Up to **five days paid emergency dependants' leave** per year.
- Enhanced bereavement leave provisions.

Health and Wellbeing

- 24/7 **Employee Assistance Programme** providing counselling and wellbeing support.
- Enhanced occupational sick pay arrangements.
- Occupational health support, including access to medical advice and counselling where appropriate.
- Funded flu vaccinations.
- Eye test reimbursement plus up to £70 contribution towards prescription glasses.

Professional Development

- Annual **£500 personal development allowance** for every employee, with additional funding available through business cases.
- Tailored learning and development support and access to coaching opportunities.

Additional Perks

- Employee discounts platform offering retail, travel, utility and entertainment savings, including discounted cinema tickets.
- Cycle to Work scheme.
- Employer-provided laptop and mobile phone, with homeworking equipment funded where appropriate.

How to apply

Peridot Partners is supporting the Royal College of Midwives on this recruitment campaign.

We are an executive search business transforming leadership and inspiring change with organisations that have a social purpose.

For details of how to formally apply and to view the recruitment timeline, please visit:

www.peridotpartners.co.uk/jobs/chief-operating-officer-the-royal-college-of-midwives/

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www.peridotpartners.co.uk

Techspace, Goswell Road, 140 Goswell Road, London, EC1V 7DY