Laura Abbott

Senior Lecturer in Midwifery

“My research looks at what it is like being pregnant in prison; I am exploring the whole experience, not just considering facts and figures, and interviewing women so that their own voices can convey what it is like to be pregnant in an English prison”.

Following five years of employment as a Registered General Nurse specialising in intensive care, Laura trained as a Registered Midwife and worked as an independent midwife. She undertook additional qualifications to become a Supervisor of Midwives which led on to a Master’s programme.

During this time, Laura also did some hourly-paid teaching within the School of Health and Social Work (HSK). She loved teaching in the School, as the environment was very welcoming and supportive. In her words, “This experience motivated me to pursue a career in academia, as I knew I had an inquisitive mind, and loved the thought of having the opportunity to engage in research in my area of expertise”. She successfully applied for the post of Lecturer in Midwifery in 2008 when her youngest of three sons became one year old. When she started, Laura was supported to complete a teaching qualification and progressed to Senior Lecturer soon after.

As her passion lied in research, Laura was encouraged to start a School-funded part-time DHRes in 2012, focusing on the experience of pregnant women in prison. Her research looked at what it is like being pregnant in prison. The School supported her during her fieldwork, by funding travel to prisons and making sure she was able to work flexibly. She also received impact funding from the University which covered travel to conferences.

After coming out of the field at the end of the summer, Laura worked temporarily part-time in order to focus on writing up her research and began networking, writing up research papers and supervising PhD students. She hopes to continue with her research and establish a research team with the aim of continuing to feed into government policy and law to ensure that changes are made to how women, and staff, are supported in the prison setting.

More about Laura Abbott: www.go.herts.ac.uk/Laura_Abbott