

Health and Social Services Committee

HSS(2)-08-06(p11)

Date: Thursday 11th May 2006

Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Home Births

Purpose

Paper to note.

Summary / Recommendations

1. This paper outlines the initiatives that have been developed to increase the home birth rate in Wales since June 2002, following the launch of 'Delivering the Future in Wales', midwifery briefing paper 4 of Realising the Potential Strategic Framework for Nursing, midwifery and Health Visiting. The paper is being presented at the request of the committee.

Background

2. 'Delivering the Future in Wales', launched by the Minister for Health and Social Services in June 2002, was developed by the Heads of Midwifery Advisory Group, Wales. One of its key principles was that women with normal pregnancies should be encouraged to consider home as an appropriate alternative to hospital for giving birth. As part of the action plan Heads of Midwifery committed to working towards increasing home birth to 10% by 2007.

3. An All Wales Home Birth Reference Group was set up in September 2002 with the support of the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer (OCNO). Its membership was made up of a midwife from each maternity unit in Wales, Royal College of Midwives, a midwife educationalist and a user representative. The terms of reference were to:

- i. Develop guidelines for support and training of midwives;
- ii. Develop an all Wales information leaflet that could be adapted locally;
- iii. Research units that have achieved high home birth rates to seek out suggestions that could be presented to Heads of Midwifery Advisory Group Wales;

- iv. Consider how the media could support home birth with positive coverage/images;
 - v. Support the head of midwifery to implement the proposals and be a resource to clinicians locally;
 - vi. Share success across Wales and offer each other peer support.
4. Local action plans were developed and the all Wales group now meet once a year to share home birth rates, to discuss the success and challenges of providing a home birth service and to review the contents of the All Wales information leaflet 'Home Sweet Home'. Three regional groups, chaired by local midwives, also operate to provide local support and to share ideas.
5. When the 10% target was set in June 2002, the All Wales and UK average home birth rate was around 1%. At the end of 2005 it had grown to 4-5%. Some areas of Wales (Bro Morgannwg, Powys, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire) have almost met the 10% target.

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