

Date: Wednesday 15 May 2002

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Antenatal Screening

Purpose

1. To enable the Committee to note the recommendation to establish a *Managed Clinical Network* of antenatal screening services on an All-Wales basis.

Background

2. In January 2001, I agreed that there should be a uniform service developed in Wales which would inform the choices of all pregnant women with regard to antenatal screening and which maintained consistent high standards. The service would need to comply with the recommendations of the National Screening Committee.

3. As the first step in a 2 stage project Velindre NHS Trust were asked to carry out a baseline study and an option appraisal, for the delivery of a uniform quality service that includes audit, monitoring, reporting and training.

4. The first phase of the study is now complete. The baseline study identified a number of concerns:

- Lack of clear policies and protocols in some Trusts;
- Inequality of service provision;
- Inadequate screening midwife hours to support service development;
- Valid consent not always obtained;
- Poor multi professional working;
- Ad hoc training;
- Lack of robust audit;
- Poor access to patient information;
- Lack of interpreter services;
- Marked variation in uptake of Down risk screening;
- HIV screening not implemented in some Trusts;
- Arrangements for offering sickle cell and thalassaemia are poor in many areas.

5. Four options were considered for the management of antenatal screening in Wales, as follows:

- To invest any additional funding available to the maternity services directly into the Trusts;
- 22 Local Health Groups (or future Local health Boards or Local Health Board Partnerships) to commission and manage antenatal screening;
- Welsh Assembly Government to commission or contract for a separate antenatal screening NHS funded organisation which provides screening services with a network of locally based clinics;
- Establish a *Managed Clinical Network* for antenatal screening.

Summary of the Recommendations

6. The recommendation of the option appraisal is that a *Managed Clinical Network* is established on an All-Wales basis.

7. A *Managed Clinical Network* would require a host organisation (an existing NHS Trust), a multi-professional management team, ring fenced funding and core local and all-Wales staff, working to a common policy with clear lines of authority and accountability. A number of additional benefits were identified:

- A national focus for appropriate links with antenatal screening developments;
- A focus for public engagement in programme development;
- A multidisciplinary group external to and independent of Trusts able to lead, facilitate and manage the quality of the programme;
- A whole system managed network, able to plan and implement new tests.

8. The recommendation will require:

- An All-Wales Multidisciplinary Management Group supported by 3 local Multidisciplinary Management Groups;
- Designated lead professionals in each Trust to support local implementation of the all-Wales antenatal screening policy and standards;
- 3 Local Programme Co-ordinators, who would support the Trust lead professionals and facilitate the local provision of an all-Wales professional screening programme;
- an all-Wales information source for women;
- appropriate quality assurance mechanisms;
- additional ring fenced funding.

9. Velindre NHS Trust already manage national screening programmes (Breast Test Wales and Cervical Screening Wales) and there would be considerable financial and non-financial advantages in sharing specialist support services with these screening programmes.

10. If the recommendations of the option appraisal were implemented, they would meet the emerging findings of the Review of Services for Children with Special Health Needs i.e. there would be consistent early diagnosis, good information to women and non-judgemental advice.

11. HIV screening is still not available to all women in Wales, although the number of Trusts offering screening has increased. £220,997 was allocated on a per capita basis to each Trust in Wales to pump prime the policy and to offer basic counselling skills training to midwives in 2001–02.

12. Integration within an all Wales antenatal screening project should provide quality assurance mechanisms; agreement on the datasets required for monitoring and regular reporting on the antenatal screening programme; and information available to women, particularly from minority ethnic groups and teenagers. It will also provide the education and accreditation requirements midwives said they required before they could implement the HIV antenatal screening policy.

13. I have recently agreed that Phase 2 of the project can proceed and that it will also include work on HIV screening. Phase 2 will be undertaken in 2002-03, this phase will develop antenatal screening services in Wales and would prepare for the future introduction of a Managed Clinical Network.

14. Phase 2 of the project will consist of:

- All Wales policies and standards for antenatal screening
- Development of a strategic approach to enable women to make an informed choice about antenatal screening by including all-Wales written information for women. All-Wales guidelines on using language line.
- All-Wales multi-professional development strategy for health professionals
- Developing an all-Wales approach to ultrasound.
- Advice to the service on enabling user involvement in antenatal screening developments
- Consider and plan the way forward for haemoglobin disorder screening.
- Develop an information management and technology strategy with recommendations regarding necessary infrastructure for audit.
- Integration of HIV antenatal screening within the antenatal screening project including audit of current provisions.

Actions for the Committee

15. The Committee is invited to note the recommendations contained in this report.

JANE HUTT

Minister for Health & Social Services

