

# **Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services (AIMS)**

**Charity number 1157845**

## **Trustees Annual Report for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

Registered Address: 1 Carlton Close, Camberley, Surrey GU15 1DS

Trustees during the year and continuing after 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2017, the date of the AGM:

Emma Jane Ashworth

Deborah Chippington Derrick

Dorothy Valentine Brassington

Shane Isabella Ridley

Virginia Ann Hatton

Ceri Lee Durham

Trustees during the year and up to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2017, but resigning as at that date:

Beverley Ann Lawrence Beech

Gillian Boden

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

The Association is a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO), governed by a constitution dated 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

All the current trustees have been elected at this year's or previous AGMs. They may also be appointed by the members or the trustees at any time. By the terms of the constitution, no trustee may be a qualified member of any medical profession including doctor, midwife, nurse or health visitor.

Trustees are regularly informed of the responsibilities of their role. Training is provided to trustees and other volunteers who answer helpline calls or emails. There were no serious incidents or other matters during the year such that the trustees should have reported to the Charities Commission but have not done so.

### **Objectives and Activities, Achievements and Performance**

The objects of AIMS are, insofar as the following relate to improvement of the provision of maternity and maternity related health services, pregnancy, childbirth, the postnatal period and early parenthood:

1. to advance, preserve and protect the mental, emotional and physical health of women;
2. to advance, preserve and protect the mental, emotional and physical health of families, parents and children;
3. to advance the education of the public, including healthcare professionals;

4. to promote human rights (as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and subsequent United Nations conventions and declarations, and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms) in the United Kingdom.

The provision of high quality, safe and legally compliant maternity services is for the public benefit as it is in society's interest that maternity services function in such a way that the mental, emotional and physical health of pregnant women, parents, children and their families are advanced and preserved. All our activities have been geared towards promoting this goal. In planning our activities for the year at the meetings of the trustees we kept in mind the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

### **Activities and achievements during the year:**

**Website.** Work on the new AIMS website continued during the year. The design of the CMS (content management system) has been complex, but is making it easy for the content to be managed by a group of volunteers. The new look of the website is mainly complete, and new content has been added and existing content from the current website transferred. The intention is to launch before the end of 2017.

**The AIMS Helpline.** This is staffed by a small team of volunteers who, during the year, have responded to enquiries. They provide information and support, mainly to women who are seeking information about their care or who may want to complain about the care they did or did not receive. The AIMS helpline is unique in its ability to support women across the UK from a lay perspective, but with the experience that only comes from decades of supporting women through thousands of different situations. The phone and email helpline continue to be very busy and we are recruiting more volunteers to join the helpline group.

**Conferences.** We held the first conference, "Celebrating Continuity– Rhetoric into Reality, Policy into Practice" in London in April 2016 in conjunction with several other organisations. The aim of the conference was to promote and encourage continuity of carer and caseload midwifery. Most of the work for the second conference held in April 2017, on the same topic, was carried out during the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. AIMS Committee members have regularly spoken at, attended or participated in conferences, not only in the UK, but also internationally as a member of the European Network of Childbirth Associations.

**Publishing.** AIMS publications are specifically designed to inform the lay reader and the AIMS website showcases the wide range of publications available. Most of the work on the book 'Gestational Diabetes', which was published in June 2017, was carried out during the year.

**The AIMS Journal.** This quarterly journal spearheads discussions about issues in the maternity services. It is highly regarded by parents, who find it an excellent source of information and support, academics and those that work in maternity care. As occasionally happens, we published three, rather than the usual four Journals during the year. The titles were "Creating Continuity", "Reforming Maternity" and "Focus on what makes a difference".

**Participation in Consultations.** We have responded to numerous requests from official bodies, such as NICE and MMBRACE to comment on their guidelines and documents, in order to ensure that consideration is given to research evidence and women's human rights and also to convey users' views.

**Discussions with the NMC.** AIMS has been actively involved in discussions with NMC about the issue of Independent Midwives insured with IMUK being told that they may not continue to practice. Other topics have included midwifery supervision, midwifery education, codes of conduct and safeguarding the public.

**Volunteers and paid staff.** AIMS would not function without the enthusiasm of the committee members and the large number of volunteers scattered around the country who support them and undertake various activities locally and nationally. Although AIMS has no paid staff, the charity continues to pay for some of the work which it contracts others to do on its behalf, for example writing books, editing and typesetting books, book distribution, producing the Journal and website material.

The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by the trustees, have been reviewed, and systems or procedures have been established to manage those risks.

## **Financial Review**

### **The New Website**

Work and fundraising for the new website continued during the year. Fundraising yielded £1,691 in the year, giving a total to date of £4,433, including the related Gift Aid. The website is almost finished and fundraising continues.

### **Membership**

Members' subscriptions continue to provide the backbone of our funding. As in previous years the cost of producing the journal takes almost all the membership fees raised.

### **Publications**

Income from sales of publications is a little lower than the previous year at £16,852 (2016: £18,435). We use a Mailing company to post out all our orders and they also store all our publications. Hence the costs of selling publications has risen slightly. We are very aware of keeping prices affordable so the prices of our publications have not gone up for many years now. The book 'bundles' also offer excellent value and are very popular.

Publications are vital for women to access and we are pleased to have a rolling programme of new books and renewals, including our new book, 'Gestational Diabetes', which was published in June 2017, 3 months after the year end.

### **Costs**

The cost of producing and distributing the journal was £9,330 (2016 £11,602) as 3 issues were produced, not 4 as in 2016. Support costs were £8,643, more than £2,750 down from the prior year (2016 £11,397). There is no charge for office rent this year as the charity's files are being moved online (2016 £2,500), but media spending increased by £680 as a result. There was also a reduction of just over £1,000 in the travel and meeting expenses, £3,288 (2016 £4,343) as a smaller number of meetings were held this year.

### **Reserves and Restricted Funds**

The reserves policy is that sufficient reserves should be held to fund six months' activities. At least this amount is held in a separate bank account. At March 31<sup>st</sup> the balance in this account was £23,439.

Funds have been, and continue to be, raised specifically for a new website and therefore this asset is held in a restricted fund.

### **Summary**

After a fourth year of surplus, breaking a pattern of losses in previous years, the financial position is steadily improving.

The independent examiner is Anthony Reps Accountancy, 10 Georges Square, Lyme Regis, Dorset DT7 3PZ.

### **Plans for the future**

The launch of the new website will enable us to move to an online version of the AIMS Journal, making it available to a much wider audience. The Journal will still contain the same mix of articles, conference reports, research reports, book reviews and news, but it will be much easier for readers to share items with others and on social media.

There will be a quarterly newsletter to members, so that when a new issue of the Journal is uploaded to the website we can let them know. We will also send them out an annual printed summary of abstracts from the year's Journals.

We know that many of our members are working very hard around the country to make change happen locally, be that working with individual parents, or as user representatives on MVPs, or as part of other campaigning groups. We plan to create campaigning help sheets which will be available to download from the website.

AIMS talks have proved very popular in the past and we hope to more of these. We would also like to be able to do some workshops on campaigning and for training helpline volunteers.

We have some amazing volunteers, without whom AIMS could not function, but we want to recruit more volunteers for a wide variety of roles.