AIMS For a better birth...

An Introduction to AIMS Position Papers – Birth Activist Update

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By Campaigns Steering Group

For the latest in our occasional series of Birth Activist Briefings, AIMS is pleased to introduce a new series of AIMS position papers. In this briefing, we provide some background to these, explaining why we have produced them and how we hope they will be of use to you.

Over the years, AIMS has developed a reputation for taking a position on a wide range of maternity service improvement related issues. By developing a set of position papers, we aim to provide clear, accessible, and up-to-date statements of these positions, what AIMS believes needs to change on a particular issue, the evidence around the issue, what campaigning AIMS is doing, and what others can do to help bring about change.

What is an AIMS position paper?

Each position paper is clearly focused on an area that AIMS has identified as one in which maternity service improvement is necessary, and seeks to explain why. The papers are written by AIMS Volunteers, are fully referenced and provide concise information on the particular topic. They are available on the AIMS website in a PDF format and therefore accessible to anyone interested in maternity services improvement. They are action-orientated so the reader (you!) can determine what needs to be done. Conveniently there are links to other AIMS material of relevance to the topic.

These position papers are intended to provide our own Volunteers with guidance to draw on when they represent AIMS in their public-facing activities, and to enable AIMS to communicate our views to policy makers and other stakeholders in a way that ultimately contributes to an improvement in the maternity services. We hope that they will also be of value for other campaigning organisations and individual birth activists to use in their own local or national campaigning.

The first batch of position papers are currently available on the AIMS website and there will be more to follow:

- Physiology-informed Maternity Services
- Decision Making in Maternity

- Continuity of Carer
- Obstetric Violence
- Choice of Birthplace
- Freebirth
- Racial Inequalities

Let's introduce the AIMS Position Paper on Obstetric Violence as an example:

The first section sets out AIMS position on obstetric violence. We call for the issue to be recognised and addressed nationally and at the local level. We explain why AIMS believes that many maternity service users are experiencing violations of their human rights. We note that AIMS supports the human rights of service users, including the absolute right to bodily autonomy. The position paper gives a summary of what obstetric violence is, and sets out why AIMS believes such experiences, and the physical and psychological injuries they cause, come to be normalised. The last couple of sections explain what AIMS is doing to raise awareness of the issue and how you can get involved to help to stamp it out. All factual information is referenced and there are links to optional reading as necessary.

How you can use it in your birth activist work

- Share it to raise awareness of the issue.
- Promote it to others who might want to use it to inform their own work, such as MVP (Maternity Voices Partnership) members or other individual birth activists.
- Share the birth information pages with maternity service users.
- If you have experienced obstetric violence, please consider making a complaint to your Trust/Board and/or the relevant professional body.
- If you are concerned about the behaviour of staff and/or Trust/Board policies and guidelines that may be causing cases of obstetric violence, please write to your Maternity Voices Partnership/Maternity Services Liaison Committee and/or your Trust/Board.

We hope you find our position papers helpful. If you have any comments on the content of any position papers, or suggestions for other topics that you would like AIMS to consider, please email campaigns@aims.org.uk and please consider joining AIMS to support our campaigning initiatives.