AIMS For a better birth...

Home Birth in the News

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Michelle Barnes shares how women in Sheffield are supporting themselves and each other

I first set-up Sheffield Home Birth Group in November 2006, after my own successful home birth after caesarean (HBAC) in May 2006. I wanted other parents to know that not only was it possible to have a home birth but that it was also possible to do it after a previous section. Since the group started I have had a tremendous amount of interest from parents, midwives, doulas and others who have an interest in home birth. The group meets once a month at members homes and I have had some lovely comments from parents using the service, including the following: 'The contacts I made during that one meeting and the helpfulness I encountered made a real impact on me. Thanks very much for running these get togethers.'

One of the problems I have found when running a group like this is reaching women who might need our support. So, whilst reading The Star newspaper, which serves South Yorkshire, I noticed that Jane Cartledge focuses on the issues which add value to family life. I contacted Jane to see if she would feature Sheffield Home Birth Group and she was really enthusiastic. On Thursday, 4 October 2007 we featured in a brilliant centre page pull out in The Star. The article, written by Jane Cartledge, was titled 'Taking the Choice of Home Birth' and began as follows:

'Since time began women have been giving birth in their own homes but in our modern high-tech world mums-to-be seem to have lost confidence in their own natural childbearing ability. Jane Cartledge met a group of mums who fought for their right to give birth at home and are encouraging other South Yorkshire women to do the same.'

The piece featured my story which you can read in much more detail in the Birth Trauma edition of the AIMS Journal[1] and the story of Fay Kenworthy, whose NHS midwives, using Mary Cronk's guidelines for care of a woman expecting twins,[2] supported her to give birth to them at home. I first met Fay at a Sheffield Homebirth Group meeting, in September 2007, when she was pregnant with her twins. The following is her story featured in The Star :

Home Office worker Fay Kenworthy always knew she wanted to give birth at home, even if she was living in student digs at the time. Fay, who was studying for an archaeology degree in Sheffield, had watched her mum deliver her younger brothers at home and, even for her first baby, there was no contest. A couple of years later Fay gave birth to her second child at home without a hitch and earlier this year she achieved what only one other woman in Sheffield has done in recent times - she gave birth to twins at

home. 'My consultant warned against it' recalled 25-year old Fay, one tot strapped to her waist, the other in a double buggy. 'He didn't say "your babies are going to die," but he did say there are lots of cases each year where things go wrong. We thought very carefully about it and sought expert advice but at the end of the day I didn't want to go into hospital, particularly as they induce you to get the second twin moving. I didn't want the continual foetal monitoring either. I had a hospital appointment on the day they were born and could feel labour starting when I was at the hospital. But I managed to hold on and get home in time and I had the twins there. My partner, three midwives, my mum and a friend who is an independent midwife were there.' Fay's labour took eight hours with gas and air. 'It was a wonderful experience,' she added.

The article, which you can read in full online at www.thestar.co.uk/features/Taking-the-choice-ofa.3258546.jp?articlepage=1, also features other Sheffield mums talking about their home birth experiences. They include Christine Horner, who also gave birth to her twins at home in 2003 and attends Sheffield Home Birth Group meetings to support other mums, and Harriet Hunt, who had a fantastic bir th experience at home after a previous traumatic experience in hospital. Harriet first contacted Sheffield Home Birth Group after a lot of wrangling with the hospital about her low platelets.

Lynne Briggs is on the group photograph but her story wasn't featured in the article. Lynne, who has supported me with the running of Sheffield Home Birth Group from the very beginning, was pregnant when the photograph was taken. She has since given birth at home for the third time, in 1 hour, 3minutes, to a beautiful baby girl called Charlotte - congratulations Lynne!

There is an online group for anyone who wishes to set up a home birth support group, or those already running them to swap ideas and pass on tips to new groups at https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/hbsupportgroups/info

If you live in Sheffield and would like further information about Sheffield Homebirth Group visit our online group at https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/SheffieldHomeBirth/info

References

1. My Healing Homebirth after Caesarean, AIMS Journal, Birth Trauma,Vol 19, No1, 2007
2. Mary Cronk Midwifery Services, My guidelines for care of a woman expecting twins, www.marycronkmidwiferyservices.co.uk/, last accessed online 29 October 2007.