AIMS For a better birth...

Good NHS Midwifery Care

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Guest Editor Michelle Barnes looks at some of the best the NHS has to offer

In compiling this journal, about good NHS midwifery care, it is apparent that there are pockets of good NHS midwifery care as highlighted in the article written by Sheena Byrom (Head of Midwifery at East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust) on page 9. However, because midwives are constantly struggling to provide good midwifery care, usually with too few resources and staff within a medicalised model of care, I found that they do not have much time to share such examples of good practice with us. So AIMS took the decision early on to gather examples of good NHS midwifery care from women's perspectives, and celebrate what women see as good NHS midwifery care, with lots of positive birth stories.

Half way through editing this journal AIMS heard the news that the Albany midwives' capacity to carry out home births (for which they are so revered) had been entirely suspended. This came as a huge shock to AIMS as the Albany Midwives are a beacon of good NHS midwifery care. Since then, we learned that the contract between the Albany Midwifery Practice and King's College Hospital has been terminated by King's. Because of this struggle the Albany Midwives were understandably unable to share details of their gold standard service to be published in this journal.

However, we have commendations from Albany service users on pages6, 15 and 26. It is fantastic to see the number of women, most of whom have had the privilege of being looked after by the Albany Midwives, campaigning tirelessly to get the successful Albany midwifery birth service re-instated.

On page 4 our Chair Beverley Beech has written about the difficulties women and midwives face when planning home births and has highlighted the current plight of the Albany mums and midwives. AIMS encourages its members to support the Albany campaign by donating to the fighting fund and joining the march, on Sunday 7 March, in London. For further details about the march, making a donation and all the latest news please visit the Save the Albany website atwww.savethealbany.org.uk

On pages 12, 13 and 14 there are details about the NHS birth pool schemes, currently running in Sheffield and Bradford. Both these initiatives are helping to make water birth easily accessible to more women. In Sheffield it was the hard work and determination of a few NHS midwives that got the birth pool service up and running and expanded across the city. These midwives should be extremely proud of their achievement. On page 7 and page 22. Unfortunately, the long-awaited project for a new Montrose Maternity Unit has been suspended indefinitely due to financial uncertainties. The service is continuing in the existing building meantime but Angus Maternity Services Liaison Committee (MSLC) is

reconvening to seek a firm commitment on its future. To support the service, see information at www.birthinangus.org.uk or become a fan of Montrose Maternity on facebook.

We know that many midwives are struggling on all fronts and that they are often discouraged and even prevented from practising midwifery as women want it to be practised. We must continue to fight for the Albany, other midwifery initiatives and individual midwives, including Independent Midwives, who provide good midwifery care. I do believe that when a service, like the Albany, is under threat it helps to highlight how good it actually is and may in turn help our case to get similar services rolled out across the UK.