AIMS For a better birth...

Reclaiming Birth Rally

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The rally took place on the bright and sunny morning of the 7th March, and attracted almost 2,000 people. The Reclaiming Midwifery rally called for the Albany model of care, and other social models of midwifery care, including caseloading midwifery practices, freestanding Birth Centres and home births, to be rolled out across the UK, as well as for more midwives to be recruited in areas where there are shortages of midwives.

When King's College Hospital management decided unilaterally to terminate its nearly 12-year contract with the Albany Midwifery Practice in November 2009, there was a public outcry. The mothers and families affected by this decision were shocked and dismayed, as were childbirth organisations and midwives in Britain and across the globe.

The Albany Midwifery Practice has long been seen as an exemplar in midwifery care. It provided continuity of care in such a way that pregnant women would get to know and trust one or two midwives who would provide all their care. Even though the families looked after were among the most disadvantaged in the country the outcomes achieved by the midwives and women were truly remarkable. The women had more home births, more normal births and few caesarean sections and forceps births. They frequently used birth pools and few needed to use drugs for pain relief. The vast majority of women breastfed their babies at birth and most continued to at least the age recommended by the DoH. Fewer babies died, only 4.9 per 1000, much lower than King's or the average rate for the area (11.4 per 1000). Not surprisingly both midwives and families were very happy with the arrangement, and the Albany Midwifery Practice was fulfilling all the outcomes aimed for by the government.

Following the unprecedented decision by King's to close the Practice, an 'Albany Mums' group was immediately set up on Facebook and has attracted nearly 700 supporters. A petition calling for the reinstatement of the Albany Midwifery Practice was signed by over 4000 people from across the world. The Albany Action Group was set up with representatives from the Albany Mums, National Childbirth Trust (NCT), Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services (AIMS) and Association of Radical Midwives (ARM). This group initiated and organised a rally called Reclaiming Midwifery, in London, which was also supported by the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) and Independent Midwives UK (IMUK).

King's has attempted to discredit the care provided by the Albany Midwifery Practice by claiming it is unsafe. The Albany Mums and the Albany Action Group has spent months attempting to get King's to provide evidence to support these claims, but they failed to do so and they have still failed to do so.