AIMS For a better birth...

Expectant Mothers Denied Choice

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Claire Rajah campaigns for the Corbar Birth Centre in Derbyshire

In May 2011 Derbyshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) publicly announced that as part of its annual spending review, it is proposing to abolish North Derbyshire's midwife-led birthing unit Corbar Birth Centre in Buxton and Darley Dale Birth Centre in Matlock, South Derbyshire.

The PCT's case for proposing the closure of the region's birth centres is purely financial, based just on the actual cost per birth and not antenatal or postnatal care, or the complete maternity ser vice required for mothers and babies in the region. Following the Board's announcement, the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) in the High Peak area of Derbyshire is leading the campaign to ensure Corbar Birth Centre stays open.

Corbar Birth Centre provides antenatal and postnatal care as well as birthing facilities for women across the rural villages and towns within the High Peak as well as the Derbyshire Dales and Staffordshire Moorlands. In addition to dedicated home-from-home birthing rooms, the centre also has a dedicated pool room. All low-risk women in labour from this catchment can give birth at Corbar. If Corbar was to close, the options left for lowrisk women in labour who do not wish to birth at home are the already over-crowded facility at Stepping Hill Hospital (SHH) in Stockport or Macclesfield General Hospital (MGH). One of the chief concerns for those opposing the closure of Corbar are the transport links.

To reach either hospital from the High Peak takes at least 25 minutes in the car, and during the winter the road can be impassable. The road from the High Peak to MGH, the A537, has been categorised as one of the most dangerous in England.

On 25 May 2011 Save Corbar Birth Centre campaign group held its first public and peaceful display at Scarsdale Hospital in Chesterfield to coincide with Derbyshire PCT's board meeting to discuss Corbar's consultation processes. The display came to the attention of the local media, and inter views took place with BBC Radio Derbyshire, Buxton Advertiser and High Peak FM. At the meeting the board decided to enter into a period of pre-engagement for Corbar with a full formal engagement period starting on 1 August 2011 and finishing on 21 October 2011.

On Saturday 18 June 2011 over 1700 people in the region signed a petition to maintain the ser vice that allows expectant mothers the choice of having their baby at a midwife-led unit in Derbyshire.

Campaigners from Save Corbar Birth Centre (SCBC), which has the backing of the NCT, High Peak MP

Andrew Bingham and more than six local councillors from the area, were in the towns and villages in the area to make people aware of the proposed cuts to maternity ser vices in their county.

Fiona Lichfield, from SCBC, said the response from people asked to sign the petition was very positive: *'It's apparent from our petition signing on Saturday that people living in the High Peak want to save Corbar not just for its strategic location, more importantly, to keep the centre's midwives here. We heard countless stories of Corbar's midwives going above the call of duty to care for women and babies from the area. It was a very heart-warming experience.'*

She added: *'On behalf of SCBC, I'd like to thank everyone who signed up to our campaign to keep Corbar Birth Centre alive. Saturday's support shows that we have the backing of the High Peak community.'*

It's a long battle ahead of us and there is still lots to be done to ensure that Corbar stays open. We hope that members of AIMS will help us to raise awareness of our campaign and provide us with guidance and advice to make sure our birthing unit does not close.

A Facebook page, 'Save Corbar Birth Centre', has been established and is the main platform for communications, with a Twitter account @SaveCorbar for the group, to help followers keep abreast of the campaign and to increase its reach. For more information, email savecorbarbirthcentre@yahoo.co.uk Copies of the petition are available at shops and offices across the High Peak.

The *Buxton Advertiser* weekly paper is also running a campaign to keep Corbar open 'Hands off Corbar', see www.buxtonadvertiser.co.uk/news/how-to-support-our-hands-off-corbar-campaign-1-3444074