AIMS For a better birth...

AIMS for the Future

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A vision without a plan is just a dream A plan without a vision is just drudgery But a vision with a plan can change the world (Old proverb)

AIMS has always been a volunteer run organisation. It began 55 years ago and has survived with pretty much the same structure - a lay chairperson, a committee of lay members and many other volunteers. Last year, AIMS became a Charity because we decided that there were some advantages to doing so which will help to ensure our existence.

With the Charity status comes additional responsibilities for the Trustees; we felt it was time to reflect on the future of our organisation, so the committee held a long working weekend. We withdrew to a secluded house, cooked and fed ourselves and generally talked a lot about AIMS and childbirth.



The AIMS committee, talking childbirth and reminding ourselves of the wonders of nature

As a result we have come away with renewed energy and enthusiasm and very exciting plans for our future. We discussed the ethos of AIMS and our vision for its future and are very much in agreement with what we would like to achieve. We want to remain an organisation with volunteers at its heart, but recognise that we do have to pay for some work to be done on occasions, as our Committee and volunteers are already contributing a great deal. We are about to start a project to create a virtual office that better suits our volunteer ethos, then we'll see whether we need to pay a coordinator to help us.

We discussed finances (which are reasonably healthy now in comparison to previous years), and the need for fundraising for a new website and new publications. We have exciting ideas about how a specially

designed website could be far more accessible to many more people, meaning that many more could benefit from AIMS' information - but this will cost us - watch out for a new fundraising effort over the coming months! The session on the Journal and our books highlighted many areas we still need to cover and we explored ways of finding more people to write for us.

Campaigning always gets the juices flowing and case loading midwifery came top of our (long) list as it encompasses so much of what women and their families need for a 'better birth' - and works for midwives too. Social Media is still a mystery to some of us, but we recognise the value of Facebook and Twitter in particular and we are working to increase our presence on them. Equally we are not all experienced enough to cope with the management of the technology needed to run our organisation, so we shared information and made plans for more training.

AIMS' telephone and email helplines are staffed by a small number of volunteers and it was a good time to share experiences and issues which arise from providing such a service.



A selection of the squares knitted in memory of our Irish sisters - see page 14

We decided at the end of our weekend that we had achieved many things - got to know each other better, agreed what AIMS' future looks like and made some decisions. Intensive yes, exciting yes, tiring yes, inspiring yes, but no conflict or falling out - who needs outwardbound courses! Our weekend was very productive for knitting too - we all knitted squares to remember the avoidable maternal deaths in Ireland that Jo Murphy Lawless and others have campaigned about over the recent years.