AIMS For a better birth...

How AIMS spent its lottery money

AIMS Journal 2004, Vol 16 No 3

As many of you are aware, AIMS recieves a lottery grant and, at the end of each year, we have to report on what we did with it. Here Suzanna Nock report on the six tasks of our last financial year, in all of which we performed creditably. We are deeply grateful for all of those whose hard work made that possible

Task 1: Produce new and updated publications

The following are new publications published last year: Vitamin K (covering the risks/benefits of the vitamin K injection that is currently routine for all babies); What's Right for Me? (to help women and their families decide what they want from the maternity services—and then get it); and Induction (an indepth look at the options for overdue women). (See page 23 for details and how to order.)

Publication of Birth after Caesarean (for women deciding how to proceed 'next time') was rushed to coincide with the NICE guidelines on caesareans at the end of April, technically the next lottery year. Two new titles (on twins and breech) are in the works, so watch this space. We've also updated Birthing Your Baby and Am I Allowed? in response to women's current demands. Our publications reflect the questions we are being asked in calls we get daily from women who cannot obtain independent, evidence-based information to help them make decisions. We aim to continue to listen and to provide up-todate referenced sources of information.

As there won't be enough lottery money to fund all of these new publications, we will make up the difference from AIMS' general funds.

Task 2: Telephone training

Workshops were held in Reading in October 2003 and in Edinburgh in May 2003 and, because of the demand, we will hold two more in 2004 in Reading again and also near York. We try to ensure that our workshops are available to people from all regions. Reading works well for the South of England and South Wales in terms of road/rail connections. Despite a few problems with the workshops, we will persevere as our helpline is very busy, and we need to spread the load.

The helpline is answered from around 9am to 5.30pm, although it may well be answered after that time. We plan to expand and have more evenings available, but it depends on volunteers. We are receiving more and more enquiries by email, but still receive some by post! People are also referred to us by healthcare providers and via NHS Direct.

Task 3: Mailouts and advertising

We have completed mailouts to all Active Birth teachers, Yoga Birth teachers, National Childbirth Antenatal teachers and all Independent Midwives. These included a letter, some leaflets and a couple of journals. We also placed ads in Parent and Baby Magazine to run for three issues.

We continue to advertise our services on our website, which has just had a major overhaul. If you haven't visited the site recently, then please check it out and give us your feedback. The website is often the first port of call for many of our clients (around 20,000 hits per month), and any ideas for improvements are welcomed (e-mail: webmistress@aims.org.uk).

Task 4: Managing administration assistance

This has been an outstanding success. Our main admin assistant, Christine Pereira, is a star! She has been instrumental in developing our database as well as in all the usual tasks - and is the mother of three. She also helped to organise a successful conference in Northern Ireland that, hopefully, has started some ideas circulating.

The final database will help us keep track of everything - publications, journal production, etc - and will be up and running soon. We have been developing our data collection techniques, and the database has proved invaluable in providing statistics and information for reviews and consultations: the government seems to send one out every month or so, and the deadlines are often very tight.

It also provides us with an overall picture of trends in maternity services as well as enabling us to locate 'hot spots' where the same issue keeps cropping up. Once they are identified, it helps us to plan a strategy and new publications, and also to contact the Trusts to express our concerns at the patterns of (or lack of) care we are seeing.

Task 5: A residential workshop for AIMS members

This was so useful that we have decided to have another one in year three - paid for by AIMS - for our post-lottery planning. AIMS members also attended a half-day workshop, and we have developed these contacts as well as used their suggestions to inform our decision-making.

Task 6: IT and webtraining

All members of the AIMS Committee who wanted it have now completed their IT training. Many were able to do their training at local colleges. These six tasks, in addition to our usual remit to support women and healthcare professionals, sit on committees, produce reports, write articles for the AIMS Journal, answer the phone and e-mails, and attend AIMS Committee meetings, were no mean feat, given that some members are over four hours of travel away.

The Journal is a central part of AIMS, and we will continue to publish articles by users and healthcare

professionals to provide a forum for their views.

We are now partway through the last year of the grant, so more new publications will be advertised here and on the website. If you have any questions about the lottery tasks or the grant, please e-mail me at: suzanna.nock@aims.org.uk.