AIMS For a better birth...

What we've been up to this quarter!

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Other quarterly updates

By the AIMS Campaigns Team

The Campaigns Steering Group continues to work alongside the other teams in AIMS, including the Social Media, Birth Information, Helpline and Journal teams, and to network with other campaigners to focus on improving maternity services during the **#covid19 pandemic**. This includes regular coalition meetings with the But Not Maternity Alliance and the ongoing maintenance of the birth information pages and campaigns sections of the AIMS website.

Our activity focus has been on developing a series of **AIMS position papers**, as an important resource for AIMS Volunteers and other birth activists. These cover key outstanding areas for maternity service improvements, together with an AIMS view on the issues and what needs to change. Initial papers on Freebirthing, Choice of Place of Birth, Decision Making in Maternity and Continuity of Carer will be published shortly. There are more under development, including Obstetric Violence and Health Inequalities and Maternity Services. We'd be interested to hear from our readers what else you want us to cover.

AIMS Volunteers have come together to focus on:

- **Obstetric violence** – the pop-up group came together to urge the government's Violence Against Women and Girls strategy review team to include the issue of **obstetric violence**. You can read our submission together with a brief explanation of what obstetric violence is here.[1]
- **Health inequalities and the maternity services** – a pop-up group is developing our understanding of the issues that drive inequalities in outcomes and how AIMS should campaign on this issue.

With the support of AIMS Volunteers, **written responses** have been made to:

- Draft NICE Guidelines on Antenatal Care[2]
- Draft RCOG Patient Information[3] – Considering a Caesarean Birth
- The government's Violence Against Women and Girls strategy review – see above
- The Health and Social Care Committee for England's Expert Panel, which is evaluating the government's commitments in the area of maternity services in England[4]

As part of the But Not Maternity Alliance, the campaigns team:

- Drafted a template letter for concerned individuals to send to Trusts who have yet to publish plans on lifting restrictions[5]
- Issued a joint press release calling on the government to add maternity to the roadmap to normality[6]
- Wrote a joint letter to Secretary of State for Health & Social Care asking for a response to this call[7]
- Held a joint meeting with National Maternity Voices bringing together MVP reps[8] from across England plus Wales and Scotland to share best practice and identify what is required at a national level
- Wrote a joint letter to NHS England sharing the key messages from this meeting[9]

Conferences and meetings we have attended include:

- A midwifery unit network meeting to discuss **#ContinuityofCarer** and its impact on core staff for MLUs in the UK
- Regular meetings of the NHS-E-organised **Maternity Transformation Programme Stakeholder Council**
- The RCOG-hosted **Each Baby Counts** full-day event
- An online webinar launching **NICE**'s new five-year strategy
- **Maternity & Midwifery Hour** online meetings, which have recently focussed on various topics including the latest MBRRACE-UK report, postnatal care and cultural safety in the maternity services. You can read more about this series of meetings here: www.maternityandmidwifery.co.uk/the-maternity-and-midwifery-hour
- An online conference focussed on poor maternity outcomes for Black women and families organised by the Manchester-based Caribbean and African Health Network (CAHN) www.cahn.org.uk,[10] which was attended by AIMS Volunteers in order to celebrate **International Women's Day** (March 8th)
- A regular **Baby Feeding Law Group** (BFLG) meeting
- The **Better Births Five Years On** conference (BB5YO) organised by NHS England
- A joint **webinar on maternity restrictions** organised by the But Not Maternity Alliance and National Maternity Voices

What we've been **reading:**

- The **Safer Maternity Care Progress Report** 2021 – published in time for the #5YrsBetterOn Event. This is well worth a read by all birth activists, as it contains a reasonable update on what's been achieved to date by the Maternity Transformation Programme (whilst falling short of a full implementation update for each of the Better Births recommendations and overall vision!). Find it

here: www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/agenda-item-9.4-safer-maternity-care-progress-report-2021-amended.pdf

- NHS-E's new guidance on Personalised Care11
- Each Baby Counts: 2020 final progress report 12
- Rachel Reed's new book, *Reclaiming Birth as a Rite of Passage*

What we've been **watching**:

Birth in the 21st Century – a Spanish documentary (with English subtitles!) which would be worth a watch by anyone interested in birth.13 It includes an interesting separate section on birthing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are also joining in Volunteer meetings, continue with our weekly Campaigns Steering Group meetings and work towards our approved quarterly action plan.

Thanks to all the AIMS campaigns Volunteers who have made all this work possible. We are very keen to expand our campaigns team, so please do get in touch with campaigns@aims.org.uk if you'd like to help!

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[1] AIMS, 'AIMS Submission to the Violence Against Women and Girls call for evidence': www.aims.org.uk/campaigning/item/violence-against-women-and-girls.
[2] National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 'Guidelines on Antenatal Care': www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-ng10096.
[3] Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 'Patient Information for Consultation': www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/patient-leaflets/developing-patient-information
[4] House of Commons Committees, 'The Health and Social Care Committee's Expert Panel': https://houseofcommons.shorthandstories.com/health-and-social-care-committee-expert-panel
[5] AIMS, 'Template Letter for campaigning about Maternity Services during the pandemic': www.aims.org.uk/campaigning/item/template-letters.
[6] AIMS, 'We have a roadmap for the nation But Not Maternity': www.aims.org.uk/campaigning/item/we-have-a-roadmap-for-the-nation-but-not-maternity.
[7] AIMS, 'Letter to Secretary of State for Health and Social Care': www.aims.org.uk/assets/media/645/letter-to-matt-hancock-1-april-final.pdf.
[8] AIMS, 'But Not Maternity/National Maternity Voices Webinar 22nd March 2021': www.aims.org.uk/campaigning/item/but-not-maternity-national-maternity-voices-webinar-22nd-march-2021.
[9] AIMS, 'Joint letter to NHS England': www.aims.org.uk/assets/media/646/letter-to-nhse-1-april-2021-final.pdf.
[10] CAHH – Caribbean and African Health Network homepage: www.cahn.org.uk.
[11] NHS England, 'Personalised care': www.england.nhs.uk/publication/personalised-care-and-support-planning-guidance-guidance-for-local-maternity-systems

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[12] Each Baby Counts, '2020 final progress report': www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/audit-quality-improvement/each-baby-counts/reports-updates/2020-report

[13] Birth in the 21st Century: http://lab.rtve.es/webdocs/parto-respetado/en/prenatal