

Hospital at night

This is a relatively new initiative which aims to increase the sharing of night-time medical responsibility across hospital units and increase the input of specialist nurses. At present it does not normally apply to obstetrics.

The new GP contract

This has had a limited impact on some hospital services. The new GP contract of 2004 made an assumption that GPs did not want to be involved in care in labour. This means that GPs now have to apply to their Primary Care Trust to provide care in labour. There is then an obligation to maintain training and skills. Most GPs have not opted in, even those who have community maternity units in their practice area.

Conclusion

In summary, these changes have drastically shortened the hours which individual doctors can work. The new arrangements also affect doctors in other specialties involved in the care of pregnant women and their babies such as anaesthetics and paediatrics. This has impacted on the provision of Intensive Care Units. In Scotland, the Maternity Standards published by Quality Improvement Scotland state that consultant-led units must have an intensive care unit.

The changes will be better for patients in some respects such as that they are now much more likely to be dealt with by a consultant or specialist registrar if in need of urgent care. Years ago the first doctor a patient would encounter in a hospital would almost always be the least experienced. However, these changes have also occasioned many reconfigurations. Unless innovative ways of staffing units are found, it's likely that many more units will be under threat.

References:

1. Calman K. *Hospital doctors - training for the future*. The report of the Working Group on Specialist Medical Training [Calman Report]. London: Department of Health; 1993.
2. European Working Time Directive.
Available from: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Policyandguidance/Humanresourcesandtraining/Workingdifferently/Europeanworkingtimedirective/index.htm>
3. *Modernising medical careers: what is MMC?*
Available from: <http://www.mmc.nhs.uk/pages/about>

Reducing infant mortality in Hackney

Jane Walker, Consultant Midwife at Homerton University Hospital in East London outlines a range of new initiatives in Hackney to reduce infant mortality

Maternity and midwifery services for mothers in Hackney (North East London) are based at the Homerton University Hospital Foundation Trust (HUHFT). The women of Hackney present with complex health and social needs which impact upon their own health outcomes and those of their babies.¹ The tendency up to now has been for midwifery services to concentrate their resources on generic patterns of care that in many ways may be less suitable for vulnerable women who may find accessing services difficult. Women who have recently arrived in the UK, asylum seekers, those who cannot communicate in English, pregnant teenagers, women with mental health problems and or drug misuse issues, and women suffering domestic violence are all well-recognised vulnerable groups.² All of these groups are over-represented in Hackney.

In January 2006, Team Hackney brought together a range of stakeholders in order that they could identify priorities suitable for application for additional funding from the government's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). Three priorities were agreed, of which one was the reduc-

tion of infant mortality. HUHFT, the PCT and the voluntary sector have therefore worked together with Team Hackney to put together the raft of initiatives summarised below. Based on locally available data, the women at greatest risk of poor outcome for themselves and their babies are targeted for additional support.

Maternity Helpline

A central telephone number and advice line will be set up to enable women to have direct contact with an experienced local midwife. The midwife can answer questions about pregnancy, advise them how to get care in pregnancy and begin the process of arranging care. They can also pass on information about community midwifery clinics and children's centre contacts.

Healthy Eating in Pregnancy (Voluntary Sector Partner)

Healthy eating is particularly important in pregnancy. Community groups will introduce 'fun' ways of learning about how to eat healthily on a limited budget. A simple screening tool will help identify women who may benefit the most from this support.

Coming soon from NCT Resources

NCT Resources for Health Professionals & Specialist Workers 2008 Catalogue

A brand new catalogue is being developed for publication in early 2008. It will feature all the latest books, publications and practical resources for health professionals and specialist workers, including suggestions we have received.

Updated NCT Mini Feeding Catalogue

Focussing on feeding products, this A5 mini catalogue is currently being updated and will be available in the Autumn. Particularly useful for reference when discussing breastfeeding with parents, it shows all the feeding products available from NCT Sales.

See www.nctresources.co.uk or call 0870 112 1120 for details

Bilingual Maternity Support Workers

There are six Children's Centre Areas in Hackney and midwives work closely with staff in the Children's Centres. Eight bilingual maternity support workers will be recruited to work in each of the community teams, alongside the midwives. This was successfully piloted with two workers in 2006. They can help with breast feeding, new baby care and help direct women to Early Years services.

Outreach Midwifery Services: Working with Refugees, Asylum Seekers and other vulnerable groups of women

A new midwifery post is created to work directly with the Sanctuary in North Hackney (a specialist GP surgery) and to act as a co-ordinating midwife for some of the most vulnerable women in Hackney. The aim is to enable women to get access to care as early as possible and, where their social situation is difficult, support them through the pathway of care. This post will be supported by a further two bilingual support workers.

How do women newly arrived in the UK find out about services, particularly if they do not speak English?

Community groups are better than professionals at getting alongside women in the places where they meet each day. Working in partnership with the local voluntary sector, women from the African and Caribbean communities in particular will train as 'Peer Educators' or 'Community Messengers' specifically to reach women 'at the school gates' and in community centres, for example. A programme of pregnancy care awareness sessions will be run on a regular basis.

Community pharmacists will also be recruited to give information about maternity services when they sell pregnancy testing kits. A new information tool, based on pictures, will be commissioned for this purpose and given out with pregnancy testing kits.

Extensive new Neighbourhood Midwifery Services in Shoreditch

The Shoreditch neighbourhood has a lot of families who are particularly vulnerable to poor outcomes in their pregnancies.

Five WTE midwives and five WTE bilingual maternity support workers will be recruited to run a group practice based in the Shoreditch area. The practice will have physical location in the area and will be supported by a part-time administrator. Continuity of care will be a priority in the antenatal and postnatal period in particular and everyone will participate in on-call arrangements (EWTD compliant). Home births will be encouraged. This group practice will form the basis of a team that can move into a community maternity centre when it is built.

Supporting African and Caribbean Women in Labour

Building on the model of labour supporters used in the Orthodox Jewish community, volunteers will be recruited from within the African and Caribbean communities and trained to work as labour supporters. We know that when used effectively, labour supporters can help reduce intervention rates and hopefully help reduce the caesarean rates amongst this group of women. A paid volunteer co-ordinator will be recruited to lead this programme of work. Volunteers who support a woman in labour will receive a £50 'thank you' voucher.

Children Centre Midwifery Services

Additional 'Sure Start' style midwifery posts to work in children's centres in the target communities will be recruited. There will be two bi-lingual maternity support worker posts to support these midwives.

All of these initiatives are funded initially for 18 months through grants from Neighbourhood Renewal Funds and subject to scrutiny from Team Hackney.

For more information, contact Jane Walker on: jane.walker@homerton.nhs.uk

References

- 1 City and Hackney Health Improvement Plan. The annual report of the Director of Public Health 2006 - 2009: Part One. London: City and Hackney Teaching Primary Care Trust; 2007. Available from: http://www.chpct.nhs.uk/trust_documents/Strategies/C&HHealthImprovementPlan2006-09.pdf
- 2 Lewis G, Drife J. Why mothers die 2000 - 2002: the sixth report of the Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths in the United Kingdom. London: RCOG Press; 2004. Available from: http://www.cemach.org.uk/publications/WMD2000_2002/content.htm

NCT Training & Workshops

NHS-ConNeCT



VOICES Facilitation

For better team working & greater effectiveness of MSLCs

NHS ConNeCT runs workshops for MSLC members. These can be multi-disciplinary facilitation sessions to help build a team with mutual understanding, shared objectives and a renewed motivation, or user rep sessions to introduce the NHS, to build confidence and to explore ways of contributing effectively. VOICES workshops are tailored to suit each group's specific needs.

NHS ConNeCT is the professional training arm of the National Childbirth Trust and runs workshops designed for those involved in maternity, neonatal and postnatal services

NHS-ConNeCT courses: Autumn 2007

Running A Dynamic Breastfeeding Session (including some baby calming techniques)

- Friday 9th November 2007 – Aberdeen

Running Effective Antenatal Classes

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