

The Midwives Role in Public Health

Introduction

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Key Message: -

“Public health in midwifery is not new. Midwives currently provide care with a public health focus. This project aims to support and promote this existing good practice.”

Welcome to the first edition of the NHS Glasgow Midwives Role in Public Health newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to share information about this exciting project to date.

The aim of developing the midwives role in public health is to have a positive impact on the health of Glasgow women and families through refocusing midwifery practice to address life circumstances as part of mainstream maternity services, whilst implementing evidence based care to support vulnerable families. This will be achieved by building on existing good practice such as breastfeeding, domestic violence and smoking cessation initiatives. Also through networking with the many other disciplines both statutory and voluntary who provide services with a public health focus.

This project is focusing on the midwives role in public health, aiming for midwives to take the opportunity in everyday practice to get key public health messages across to women and families. This will enable midwives to network more effectively with other key stakeholders related to public health such as health visitors, public health practitioners and other multi-agency colleagues.

Ann Holmes accepted the remit for



implementing public health midwifery in Glasgow when she was appointed as Scotland's first Consultant Midwife in 2000. She continues to lead the agenda through: -

- Establishing local, national and international links within midwifery and multi-professional groups
- Initiating a public health network group, to do some preliminary exploratory work around the vision for public health midwifery in Glasgow
- Writing a 4 year strategy for implementing public health midwifery in Glasgow
- Securing funding to second a Midwife to assist in developing options for implementing a model of public health midwifery across Glasgow

Progress to date

Within the first 16 months the project has: -

- Established a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary, steering group, including user representation
- Produced a definition of public health midwifery for Glasgow
- Identified midwifery priorities for Glasgow Women's health
- Agreed a long-term vision for midwifery and community maternity services in Glasgow
- Agreed a medium-term plan for community midwifery services
- Proposed a redesigned antenatal and postnatal care programme to assist in delivering midwifery care with a public health focus
- Developed a public health assessment tool, which will be supported by care pathways to allow midwives to detect and refer issues related to public health to the appropriate professionals and agencies
- Produced options for implementing public health midwifery across the city, which will be implemented during the ongoing maternity services review.

Further information is available from the following steering group members: -

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The Stakeholder Event

A multi-agency multi-disciplinary steering group with 25 members supports the public health midwifery project. The group held a ½ day stakeholder event to allow key opinion leaders and stakeholders to shape the development of the project. This highly successful event took place at The Beardmore Hotel in July 2003. 30 participants took part in the event. An external facilitator led the day, with participants working in groups. By the end of the session consensus had been agreed on: -

- Key public health priorities for Glasgow midwives

- Potential shape of the service and role for midwives
- Training needs for midwives to prepare them to deliver the public health agenda.

Participants also highlighted the need for: -

- Valuing the core role of the midwife
- Continuity of care
- Multi-agency, multi-professional working

Defining Public Health Midwifery for Glasgow

In seeking to define the public health role of the midwife in Glasgow information was gathered from existing sources. The Royal College of Midwives in 2001 published a position statement around the midwife's role in public health; the Independent Inquiry Into Inequalities in Health Report (1998) suggested there was a role for midwives; and local work in Drumchapel looking at the public health plan for 2003-2004 outlined the role for midwives. Utilising this and other policy information, the following definition was proposed and agreed: -

"In providing care under the umbrella term of public health midwives must understand the context in which a woman presents herself, showing an awareness of the environmental, biological, social and lifestyle factors which impact on health. Care provided

should be based on a model of health, not disease and should tackle all the broad determinants of health not just individual lifestyle factors.

In planning the provision of maternity care; midwives in consultation with unified NHS Boards must acknowledge the role of the community. Care must be planned, individualised and holistic but should also show an understanding of the women's social circumstances and role within this broader context. In this wider context, communities themselves play a large role in addressing the health issues that women experience. Midwives whilst working co-operatively with other multi-agency members must empower women, families and communities to improve their health thus ensuring a healthier nation."

Current Work

To progress the public health midwifery agenda the current workplan includes: -

- Developing interagency guidance to support midwives using the assessment tool
- Planning an education programme with midwives
- Building a research programme and writing bids for funding to evaluate the impact of changing the existing model of midwifery care.

Conclusion

These are very exciting times for midwifery in Glasgow. We have had the opportunity to present our work at several conferences where the audiences were extremely interested in the plans for midwifery in Glasgow. Glasgow is currently leading the way in developing (some may say reclaiming) a true public health role for midwives.

"The aim of this project is to have a positive impact on the health of Glasgow women and families"

