

Independent Midwives, Endangered Species?

The independent Midwives Association is involved in a nationwide campaign to save independent midwifery. We have support from the NCT, AIMS, ARM and many other groups and individuals; however we still need more support in order to safeguard our future and the choice of Independent Midwifery for pregnant women.

This year, the Government plans to make professional indemnity insurance **compulsory** for all registered health professionals, including midwives. This means that it will become illegal to practice as a midwife without insurance. This sounds on the surface entirely reasonable – after all, you wouldn't drive a car without insurance – in fact, you might be surprised to find that this is not the case already. However the big difference is that, while midwives employed by the NHS are insured via vicarious liability, there is simply no insurance available for independent midwives. The government knows this. It's like them saying that it is illegal to drive a car without insurance but there are no companies who provide it. Unless we are successful in fighting this proposed change in legislation, practising independent midwifery will become illegal, and in all probability independent midwives will disappear. This is not because of huge claims against independent midwives – far from it. Infact the issue arose because of claims against other professionals however childbirth and insurance do not sit well together. Birth is unique in that occasional poor outcomes are expected, blame is often hard to prove and yet insurance payouts run into millions of pounds because life-long caring is taken into account. Insurance companies are not altruistic; they are in insurance to make profit and there is no profit in childbirth. Even if all independent midwives put money in a pot there would not be enough to cover the pay-out for one baby with cerebral palsy.

Independent midwives may be small in number, but what they stand for are two vital principles: choice for women to be attended by a midwife they have chosen, and choice for midwifery to be practiced in the way midwives and women choose. The NHS finds difficulty in providing this.

You may also like to know that we have proposed a way forward to the Government which is gaining support. That way forward is the implementation of a model of care called the NHS community Midwifery Model (NHSCMM) The model gives women the type of care that Independent midwives provide but will be free to all women.

<http://www.independentmidwives.org.uk/?node=725>

How can you help?

Visit www.kentmidwiferypractice.co.uk and sign the on-line petition

Consider letter writing campaign as suggested on our campaign website

www.saveindependentmidwifery.org

If you would like to discuss this issue further, please do get in touch with me.

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www.3shiresmidwife.co.uk