

September 2019



**Birth Hub**  
Community • Education • Choice

Dear CCDHB Candidate

We are a mix of pregnant women, mothers, childbirth educators, midwives and other health professionals and their whānau who are advocating for improved birthing services in the Wellington greater region.

**We would like to know how, if you are elected to the CCDHB, you propose to ensure the DHB meets its obligations to the [Maternity Standards](#) set by the NZ Ministry of Health:**

- 1. Maternity services provide safe, high-quality services that are nationally consistent and achieve optimal health outcomes for mothers and babies.*
- 2. Maternity services ensure a woman-centred approach that acknowledges pregnancy and childbirth as a normal life stage.*
- 3. All women have access to a nationally consistent, comprehensive range of maternity services that are funded and provided appropriately to ensure there are no financial barriers to access for eligible women.*

**We believe that due to continued under-funding and under-resourcing, CCDHB cannot say that it currently provides a service that leads to optimal health outcomes for mothers and babies. It also cannot say that they are providing an environment that is woman-centred.**

Currently maternity services are very stretched, with diminishing workforce and insufficient resources within the CCDHB. There is inequity in access to primary birth settings. Wellington central does not have a Primary Maternity/Birthing Centre.

Porirua has a DHB funded Primary Maternity Unit (Kenepuru) that is under-utilised and would benefit from being upgraded and promotion. Kapiti Primary Maternity Unit is based in Paraparaumu and is well utilised but could still benefit from resource input.

Our group presented at a CCDHB Board meeting in August 2017 about the importance of supporting primary birth units along with promotion and education about the safety of primary birth, and we have also had various communications and meetings in the years before that with the CCDHB on the same subject. Following our presentation, we were asked to be part of the CCDHB Steering Group for Primary Birth but the work has been *very* slow going, and we would like to see more urgency to the process and feel that better understanding and support by the Board would be helpful.

There is robust research to support healthy women with low-risk pregnancies to birth in Primary Units. When compared with secondary or tertiary maternity units, primary birth settings are proven to have better birth outcomes for those mothers and babies who are clinically eligible to use them, with less interventions such as caesarean section; and decreased morbidities such as postpartum haemorrhage and neonatal special or intensive care unit admissions.

Positive birth experience has been identified in [WHO 2018 Intrapartum recommendations](#), that the concept of experience of care is a critical aspect of ensuring high-quality labour and childbirth care and improved woman-centred outcomes, and is not just complementary to provision of routine clinical practices. WHO also states that “childbirth is a physiological process that can be accomplished without complications for the majority of women and babies”. This is not reflected in Wellington with the CCDHB’s caesarean section rates now at 31.5% at CCDHB in 2017 (latest annual report figures).

**The DHBs have Treaty obligations to Māori; partnership, participation and protection.** Research shows that Māori women prefer a primary centre. The whānau-friendly environment of a birth centre can be more culturally appropriate and allows for better engagement with the maternity service. We would like to see real engagement with Wellington's Māori community to see a service that really provides an appropriate service to Māori.

**Please see below the links to the research around birth-place and latest WHO recommendations for intrapartum care.**

<https://portal.midwife.org.nz/research-article/1368>

<https://portal.midwife.org.nz/research-article/794>

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/260178/9789241550215-eng.pdf>

For more research references please see [www.birthhub.org](http://www.birthhub.org).

Primary Birthing completely fits with so many of the CCDHB's strategic directions e.g. the first 1000 days and bringing Health Back Home.

Please let us know your thoughts on financing of, and support for, the maternity sector, an area which is right at the beginning of the health journey for our future generation.

Kind regards

Birth Hub