The high impact actions for nursing and midwifery 7: promoting normal birth

Over the past 20 years, more and more babies have been born by C-section. We need to eliminate unnecessary procedures and increase normal birth rates.
information they need to make informed choices about the place and method of birth. Multidisciplinary training includes normal birth study days, where staff are put into multiprofessional teams and asked to re-enact emergencies. New processes ensure a faster response to incidents, involving the entire team. The new two way appraisal system has increased teamwork and removed a culture of mistrust.

CASE STUDY 2: TOP TO BOTTOM CULTURAL CHANGE
A C-section rate that peaked at 31% in April 2009 was a wake up call for Luton and Dunstable Hospital's maternity unit. Having a level 3 neonatal unit had created a perception among staff that it was a place suitable for high risk births. To counteract this, the hospital made a commitment to normalise birth through top to bottom cultural change.

The trust introduced a midwife lead for normality to champion normal birth with staff and pregnant women, and developed a birth options clinic for women who had previously had a Caesarean. A daily multidisciplinary review meeting was introduced to look at all the deliveries in the previous 24 hours; here, staff at every level are encouraged to speak out and even challenge senior staff if they need to.

The philosophy on normalising birth extends to staff at every level. Normality study days have been developed for community midwives, as they are crucial in promoting normality; study days are held on Saturdays to improve access. A new skills book for maternity care assistants details training and competencies; when they join the trust, they are introduced to look at all the deliveries in the previous 24 hours; here, staff at every level are encouraged to speak out and even challenge senior staff if they need to.

The trust also has a weekly Caesarean audit and a daily review of emergency Caesareans to monitor what is happening in real time.

Impact of the initiative
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THE CLINIC

The clinic is being evaluated and audited around half were successful. A prebirth clinic is now being planned to advise women on early labour and to encourage self care.

CASE STUDY 3: SUPPORT FOR WOMEN AFTER PREVIOUS CAESAREAN
Stockport Foundation Trust has a tradition of promoting normality in childbirth. In 2008, it focused on reducing C-sections by supporting women who had had one before. It was chosen as a pilot site for NHSIII's Focus on Normal Birth and Reducing Caesarean Section Rates toolkit.

Stockport established its first service users’ forum to involve parents in developing services. These developments include:
- A weekly VBAC clinic post 20 week scan;
- VBAC workshops where women talk about their experience and answer questions;
- A postnatal debrief in response to feedback;
- Choices, a DVD of delivery options for women, now available on the trust’s website;
- Facilitated “time out” sessions for delivery suite coordinators;
- Using everyday language to help women understand complex information.

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CASE STUDY 4: A WIDE RANGING PROGRAMME TO NORMALISE BIRTH
Western Sussex Hospitals Trust has increased its VBAC rate by more than 300% from 26% in 2006 to 84% in 2009. Water births now account for 5% of all deliveries and C-section rates have reduced by 2% and are still falling. A 2% reduction equates to a yearly saving of £96,285. There is a far greater emphasis on normal birth, particularly following a C-section, and women can choose from a greater range of birth environments. The midwife counsellor provides debriefing and support following a traumatic birth experience. “Comments on our services” cards have been redesigned to ensure staff get more useful feedback.

WHAT ARE THE BEST SOURCES OF INFORMATION?
- NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement
  - Focus on: High Volume Care. tinyurl.com/NHSHigh-volume
- Maternity Matters: Choice, Access and Continuity of Care in a Safe Service. tinyurl.com/ DH-maternity
- National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services. tinyurl.com/NSF-young
- NICE guidance on C-section. www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG13
- NICE. Intrapartum Care: Management and Delivery of Care to Women in Labour. www.nice.org.uk/CG005
- RCM campaign for normal birth. www.rcmnormalbirth.org.uk
- References
  - NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement (2006) Focus On: Caesarean Section. tinyurl.com/NHSII-caesarean