

Move to cut home births risk

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Wellington staff

Home births are not recommended by the maternity services committee of the Board of Health.

But the committee accepts that home births will continue and has made recommendations to reduce the risks of such confinements.

A report by the committee, *The Mother and Baby at Home: The Early Days*, concerns the early discharge of mothers and babies from hospital, as well as home births.

The report says that for most families the best possible care, both technological and emotional, during the sensitive birth and postnatal periods will be best achieved in a maternity hospital of appropriate

type for the adjudged risk.

It accepts that some families may wish to have home confinements and says that in some cases early discharge from hospital may provide a practical compromise.

The committee says the highest standards of care should be promoted in home confinements. People being delivered at home should be provided with the best back-up services from the nearby obstetric unit.

Mothers with accepted risks should be delivered in hospital, it says.

It says hospital boards should review midwives' contracts for home births in their area, making them available only to registered midwives with recent experience in a modern obstetric unit.

The attending general practitioner should also have had adequate post-graduate and continuing education in obstetrics, and hold a current hospital board contract.

The committee says the GP should apply strict criteria in selecting patients suitable for home delivery in the light of the risk and the environment of the home in which the delivery is to take place.

The report recommends that the covering doctor be required to be present at the delivery in the same way as he would be at a hospital delivery.

Overall responsibility for the care of the patient would be with the GP. The report lists basic essentials in a home where a delivery is to take

place as: telephone, all-weather vehicle access, adequate lighting, basic comfort with a good level of cleanliness, sanitation and hygiene, and a proper clean water supply with adequate hot water, and capable, sensible relatives or friends at hand for support and help if required.

It says that for early discharge from hospital to take place the delivery should be normal, the baby should be normal, and the baby should have a repeat examination by a medical practitioner before mother and baby are discharged.

Any programme for home delivery or early discharge should be very carefully monitored for problems especially in the babies, the report said.