

Hospital and home-care free maternity service to be tried

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Health reporter

Contracts just signed offer Wellington women a new maternity service, providing continuity of care at home, combined with a hospital birth.

Called Domino, the free service involves antenatal visits at home to give the woman an opportunity to get to know her midwife.

When the woman goes into labour, the midwife goes to her home or meets her in hospital and stays for the labour and birth.

Soon after, the woman returns home with her baby and the same midwife continues her care with up to 12 postnatal visits.

The scheme has been set up as a one-year pilot study. The midwives have contracts with the Wellington Area Health Board and the Health Department. One part-time and three fulltime midwives are involved.

"As shift workers, we were picking up and leaving women at crucial times in their labour," spokeswoman Carey Virtue said.

"Women were saying clearly to us that they would like to know their midwife in advance and they would like to keep the same midwife throughout their labour."

The main aim was to provide women with a choice. Many women had preferences for the type of labour they preferred and, with one midwife in attendance throughout the whole labour, it was more likely the women would achieve ideal labour.

World Health Organisation figures suggested 85 percent of



Domino midwives Lynley Davy (left), Carey Virtue (rear), Marion Lovell (front) and Jane Midwood.

women who gave birth should be able to do so normally without intervention. The Wellington Hospital intervention figure was around 40 percent, she said.

Interest had been so great that the service initially had to be restricted to women in the South Wellington area.

The board's manager of wom-

en's health, Gay Allcock, said women outside the southern area, who felt they would benefit from the scheme, could approach the midwives.

The scheme was cost-effective, but the initiative was not prompted by cost savings, it was aimed at providing women with a greater choice in childbirth.

Newtown GP Julia Carr said the hospital system meant midwives did not get time to develop a rapport with women in labour. They might be caring for two to three women at the same time.

Women often asked for pain relief after a change of shift, indicating the stress involved in getting used to another midwife.