

Group plans to provide 'extra' place of birth

By health reporter Sue Green

KING size beds, your choice of music and food may sound more like setting the scene for a honeymoon than a birth.

But that's what the Birth and Beyond group has in mind for the out-of-hospital birth centre it plans to set up in Wellington.

The centre would add to the choices women have in deciding where to give birth and how to prepare for it, and would be a local resource centre, not just for birth, but for parenthood.

It would be a place women could go with their partners and families to give birth and an education centre offering ante-natal education and post-natal support.

A spokesman for the group, Mrs Ros Capper, says, "no one drops in for a birth. They are all fully prepared."

The pregnant woman and those who will be present at the birth would all take part in the ante-natal education. Early in the labour they would go to the centre and their doctor would be advised of their progress.

The doctor would be asked to be present at the birth, but the delivery would normally be by one of the centre's midwives.

If it seemed the birth may not be normal the woman would be referred somewhere more appropriate, hospital, for instance.

Idea

The idea for such a centre has been around for some time.

Mrs Capper says a proposal has been circulated to local doctors, obstetricians and midwives and groups like Plunket. The response has been very positive.

"I think generally that people are beginning to be more aware they have choices in their lives and that birth is one such area in which they have choices," she says.

But next Tuesday the group will come to grips with the tin tacks of public support, money and premises. It is holding a public meeting at Crossways, Mount Victoria, at 8pm. Local people will be asked for their ideas and their support in fundraising and finding a site for the centre.

Ros Capper is herself a mother who says she would

have liked to have had more information about the choices open to her when she had her two children.

She is a registered nurse who runs groups for women including assertiveness courses. Through them she has become aware of the feelings of powerlessness many women have.

She believes the birth centre will happen and it is wanted and needed.

Control

"The whole thing" she says, "takes more power over your life and you are your own expert on what is best for you."

The centre proposal aims at helping parents and families get the most out of an event which, on average, happens only twice in their lives.

It is not anti-hospital or home births. It is an extra. By making their own decisions and going home soon after the birth parents would form closer ties with their children and feel more comfortable about being a parent, Mrs Capper says.