



Every Drop Counts

United Kingdom Association for Milk Banking

PE1426/I

In response to the request for information on the views of the UK Association for Milk Banking (UKAMB) on Petition PE1426 please accept the following:

UKAMB is a registered charity that supports human milk banking in the UK and was set up in October 1997. Our motto is 'Every Drop Counts' and we believe that the provision of safe and screened donor breastmilk makes an important contribution to the care of the premature and sick infants who receive it. Every day in the UK, more and more babies receive donor milk as a result of the work of this charity.

The development of a national milk bank for Scotland would be an important step towards the goal of equitable availability and provision of donor milk throughout the UK and as such is fully supported by the UKAMB.

The current provision of donor milk in Scotland via the Glasgow Milk Bank based at Yorkhill Hospital offers the ideal base for the development of a national service. The expertise to operate the bank is available and with additional trained staff and an increase in facilities and equipment, the current established bank would be best placed to respond to a growth in demand as more hospital neonatal units use donor milk for the early enteral feeding of preterm and sick infants.

The criteria for the use of donor breastmilk and so the expected demand would need to be established as currently, throughout the UK, there are widely divergent protocols dictating how it is used within neonatal services. These differ according to local consultant opinion and so have not only been developed in accordance with the available supply of milk.

Very few milk banks in the UK operate with a separate budget as most milk bank services are provided within the neonatal services of an NHS Trust. It has not been possible to provide useful comparative costs across all milk banks in the UK as staffing costs are absorbed within the wider budgets and staffing provision for milk banks vary from a single part time nursery nurse to 3 or more full time staff equivalents. The true cost of the provision of donor milk is largely unrecorded and the provision of donor milk from milk banks in England varies from approximately 50 litres per year to 1000 litres. The services provided by these milk banks would not be a representative model on which to base a national service for Scotland as they do not generally incorporate the geographically widespread recruitment of donors or the widespread delivery of donor milk.

As with most services, the cost of provision per litre of donor milk would be expected to reduce as the scale of provision increased. The capacity and output of all milk banks in the UK is restricted by available staffing and funding and not by the availability of donated breastmilk. The equipment required to operate a milk bank is largely unused for much of the time, even in the milk banks with the largest output.

Gillian Weaver, Chair: UKAMB National Milk Bank Forum (www.ukamb.org)

15th August 2012