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National Downs Syndrome Register Report shows women make informed choices about ante-natal tests

Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC) welcomes the publication of the 2011 Annual Report from the National Down's Syndrome Cytogenetic Register (NDSCR). It allows us to concentrate on the facts rather than the misrepresentation of the facts that has been circulated in certain sections of the media in the last two weeks.

The NDSCR has provided high quality data on the outcomes of pregnancies diagnosed with Down's syndrome pre- and postnatally in England and Wales since 1989.

The 22 years' worth of data show us that while increasing maternal age and more sensitive screening has inevitably led to a rise in prenatal diagnosis, the number of live births of babies with Down's syndrome in the same time has remained constant. Antenatal screening for Down's syndrome is *offered* to women in the NHS and many decide not to take it up – women are making informed choices.

The concern surrounding the discrepancy between the statistics for termination of pregnancy after a diagnosis of Down's syndrome published by the NDSCR and the Department of Health (DH) is misplaced. The official form returned to the DH simply certifies the legality of the abortion. Before 24 weeks, clinicians can make use of Ground C if they believe in 'good faith' that continuing the pregnancy will adversely affect the mental health of the woman concerned.

ARC Director, Jane Fisher says: *"At ARC we speak to expectant parents about antenatal screening and testing every day on our national helpline. We know how seriously and responsibly they take decision-making after screening and diagnosis. We know we can trust parents to make the difficult decisions that are right for them in their individual circumstances."*

Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC) provides non-directive information and support to parents throughout antenatal testing and its consequences.

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