



monitoring
for mums appeal

Baby Lifeline launches 'Monitoring For Mums' appeal at anniversary gala in bid to improve maternity training and equipment across the UK

LEADING specialists have united behind Baby Lifeline in calling for a new national standardisation of training for maternity providers across the UK.

Launching our 'Monitoring for Mums Appeal', we are calling for a greater focus on in-house training across all NHS Trusts, ensuring they deliver the same, relevant programmes covering key areas of care, whilst also raising funds for maternity units in hospitals across the UK to buy vital new equipment.

With the Government targeting halving the number of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries in babies by 2030, with a 20 per cent reduction by 2020, we believe our campaign can help drive up standards and help save hundreds of lives a year.

Our campaign has been launched following a huge national research project in which we approached all UK health care Trusts and questioned them about their maternity care and training, under the Freedom of Information Act.

Partnering with the [University of Hull](#) to analyse the responses from 125 Trusts, we found;

- Over half of Trusts provided 4 days or less of in-house mandatory maternity training every year, with many having a heavy reliance on e-learning and poor, or non-existent, evaluation of training programmes.
- There is no consistency over which areas of maternity care are classed as 'mandatory' for training at Trusts.
- Only 50 Trusts highlighted newborn screening as part of their training programmes.
- Less than a quarter of Trusts highlighted teamwork and communication in obstetric emergencies as being part of mandatory training
- Training is delivered in different ways from Trust to Trust, with no clear standardisation of topics, duration of training, method of delivery, frequency or assessment.

Calling for the introduction of the new standardised training programme – in which health trusts will have to meet set numbers of hours training in specified areas of maternity care – we have secured support from many leading medical figures.

Baby Lifeline founder and maternity care campaigner Judy Ledger said: "What we have identified here is a clear lack of clarity and standardisation when it comes to what maternity providers should be doing to ensure their staff are fully trained in the most crucial aspects of maternity care at all times.

“We can also see that many trusts are short of vital equipment which could be the difference between the life of a mother or baby being saved or lost. Changes have to be made as mothers and babies are being failed too often.

“The Government has made recommendations to improve maternity training and care across the UK but has failed to implement the vision due to lack of funds.

“The improvements the Government wants to make will simply not be possible without establishing a clear mandatory programme for training on maternity wards across the country, with agreed topics, duration, methods and process for them to be assessed. It is quite staggering to learn of how training currently varies from Trust to Trust.

“Baby Lifeline recognises the huge financial and time pressures on maternity services, but we have to look at the long-term picture.

“At present, a fifth of maternity services funding is spent on insurance against negligence claims, with NHS in England spending £482m on clinical negligence cover in the last year, the equivalent of £700 per birth.

“Not only is this a huge amount of money coming out of NHS budgets, but then there is also the ongoing cost of what is often life-long care needed for the many children who suffer as a result of negligence at birth, as the most common reasons for maternity claims are mistakes during labour or caesarean sections and errors resulting in cerebral palsy.

“It simply cannot be right that training provision varies widely between hospital Trusts in England, in terms of which topics are offered and how they are provided.

“We’d welcome any discussions with Government officials on how this could be moved forward, and would love to help find solutions to plug the obvious training gap which exists and cannot be allowed to continue.”

Professor James Walker, of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Leeds Institute of Biomedical & Clinical Sciences, has supported Baby Lifeline for more than 15 years, and feels this campaign has the potential to save many lives.

“Mothers giving birth expect that they and their babies will be alive and well. Too often our health care system fails them because the monitoring available is either inadequate or not carried out to the standard expected,” he said.

“I have been involved with Baby Lifeline for over 15 years and I think this is the most innovative and beneficial programme of work I have seen. It aims to partner with the care providers to make sure they have the best monitoring equipment available and the best training for their staff to utilise it.

It has the potential to save many hundreds of lives. I fully back this appeal and am really excited by what it will do.”

Professor Simon Mitchell, Consultant Neonatologist at St Mary’s Hospital in Manchester, says improved training around baby monitoring can make a huge difference.

“Effective fetal monitoring during labour is one important component in the earlier identification of potential problems affecting the baby, allowing the opportunity for earlier intervention when time may be crucial,” he said.

“Appropriate equipment, together with relevant training and support for healthcare professionals involved in intrapartum care, are each of vital importance in this respect.

“By seeking to support both of these, the Baby Lifeline Monitoring for Mums appeal will ensure that the best possible monitoring facilities and requisite skills are as widely available as possible wherever mothers choose to deliver.”

James Drife, Emeritus professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Leeds and Honorary President of the Baby Lifeline charity, feels the campaign is addressing an area of healthcare which has badly needed improvement.

“There is an urgent need for more and better in-service training for NHS maternity teams,” he said.

“Some professionals, such as firefighters or footballers, devote most of their working time to training. The NHS, however, gives it surprisingly low priority. Hospital staff have few statutory training days and these tend to be on subjects like hand hygiene and fire prevention. Study leave is severely limited by financial pressures, and because staff cannot be spared from their day-to-day work.

“National NHS agencies agree that training is the way to tackle the remorseless increase in obstetric litigation, and the human tragedies that it represents, but they pass the buck when it comes to paying.

“Consequently, midwives and doctors, acutely aware of the need to maintain the highest possible standards, often finance courses in their own time themselves.”

Julie Jomeen, Professor of Midwifery and Dean in Faculty of Health & Social Care at The University of Hull, said: “Whilst labour and birth for the majority of women is a normal event, for a proportion it does not necessarily go to plan.

“It is in those circumstances that well trained staff and specialist equipment can become essential to safeguard the wellbeing of mother and baby and continue to promote normality wherever possible.

“In the current NHS, we know adequate funding for training and equipment is not always available. The Monitoring for Mums appeal therefore can play a vital role in providing these which will ultimately support good birth outcomes.”

The campaign has been welcomed and is being supported by [medical negligence specialists Hudgell Solicitors](#), a firm which says it sees too many cases of serious injuries or deaths due to poor monitoring equipment and training – cases which often result in multi-million pound compensation claims being made against the NHS.

Amanda Stevens, Group Head of Legal Practice at the firm, worked as the manager of a maternity unit at a London hospital before entering the legal profession, and says the campaign is tackling the key areas needed to improve standards.

I personally have seen far too many cases in which lives have been lost or severely impaired because of poor monitoring equipment in hospitals or maternity staff not being fully trained in using the equipment effectively,” she said.

“There are so many excellent midwives and clinicians who go above and beyond their duty and are completely committed to providing the best care, but they are working in fear of something going

wrong because they don't have the equipment they need or colleagues lack the relevant, updated training.

"It is simply unfair to put this pressure on those working in maternity units, and to place mothers and babies at risk during pregnancy and birth.

"We always campaign for improvements in standards and training, but often it is pushed down the priority list by managers who have budgets at the forefront of their minds.

"Hopefully this campaign will not only bring this issue into the national spotlight, but also lead to better maternity equipment and training across the UK."

Campaign provides chance for people to raise funds and donate towards vital new maternity equipment at their local hospitals

The Monitoring for Mums campaign is giving people across the UK the chance to raise funds or donate directly to their local hospital maternity units – ensuring they can purchase much needed equipment which hospitals have identified themselves as being required to improve standards of care.

As part of the campaign, Baby Lifeline asked UK NHS maternity units to list the equipment needed to provide the best possible maternity service to mothers and babies – with each hospital having its own dedicated fund-raising target, and [details of the equipment they need on the campaign website](#).

Baby Lifeline founder Judy Ledger believes it is a unique campaign, as it gives people the opportunity to make a real difference in their communities, making donations which could save the lives of future generations of their own families.

She said: "Baby Lifeline receives applications for funding from the majority of NHS maternity units, and over half of those ask for important monitoring equipment, and associated training for staff, so it is clear that there is a huge need for updated, modern equipment.

"Through our campaign website, we are making it simple for people to see exactly what their local maternity unit requires, how much it will cost, whilst providing a simple way to donate. People can see that their money is going to improve maternity services local to them.

"We believe this donation website, alongside our campaign to improve in-house training in all UK hospitals, can make a real difference to families across the UK, reducing stillbirth rates, avoiding preventable brain injuries and promoting normal birth."