



monitoring  
for mums appeal

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## **‘Training gap’ must be filled to improve UK maternity care and reduce avoidable deaths and injuries to mums and babies**

- **Baby Lifeline charity marks 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary by launching ‘Monitoring for Mums’ campaign calling for change**
- **FOI research reveals Trusts commit less than 5 days a year to in-house training for maternity staff**
- **Majority of Trusts don’t offer training in new-born screening or examinations or maternal resuscitation**
- **Campaign website allows people to donate to local hospitals for new maternity unit equipment**

LEADING specialists have united in calling for a new national standardisation of training for maternity providers across the UK – saying current methods are failing to drive up standards and failing mothers and babies across the country.

Launching its ‘Monitoring for Mums Appeal’, the charity Baby Lifeline UK says a greater focus on training across NHS Trusts, ensuring all deliver the same, relevant programmes covering key areas of care, could help save hundreds of lives each year.

It comes as the Government has targeted halving the number of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries in babies by 2030, with a 20 per cent reduction by 2020.

A report last year concluded that the lives of hundreds of unborn babies could be saved if their mothers were given better care during pregnancy.

More recent research by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) claimed between 500 and 800 babies die or acquire severe brain injuries due to something going wrong during labour each year in the UK – more than one a day.

Now, Baby Lifeline –The Mother and Baby Charity which campaigns for greater standards of care on maternity wards across the UK - says these targets will not be met without major changes to the training and development of maternity staff.

It follows a huge national research project, in which all UK health care Trusts were questioned about their maternity care and training under Freedom of Information Act requests.

Baby Lifeline, which partnered with University of Hull to analyse the responses by Trusts, says the feedback from the FOI requests, to which 125 Trusts responded, revealed;

- **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.**

Reviewing in detail a representative sample of 85 cases of stillbirths in the UK last year, a team of experts from MBRRACE-UK found there were failures in the care of half of them.

They found that key warning signs were missed, and half of the pregnant women whose babies died had told medical staff they were worried that the baby in the womb was no longer moving.

In half of those cases, either there was no investigation, the baby’s heart rate was monitored but misinterpreted, or staff in the maternity unit failed to respond correctly to warning signs.

Tests that would have alerted staff to the need to monitor the pregnancy more closely were not carried out. Women at risk of developing diabetes were found not to have been not tested, and national guidance for checking that the baby was growing normally were not followed.

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 – the charity has secured support from leading medical figures as it marks its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

It is also using the campaign to raise funds for key equipment required on maternity units across the UK, having asked all Trusts to highlight what is needed to improve care on their wards.

In total, equipment requested totals a value of more than £4.5m.

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.”

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.”

**ENDS**

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS AND MEDIA INVITE**

### **Media Invitation - Appeal launch with leading clinical experts and celebrity supporters**

Baby LifeLine’s ‘Monitoring For Mums’ appeal will be officially launched at the charity’s 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary Gala Dinner at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on Thursday, September 8.

It is to be attended by many leading, senior consultants and professional obstetricians, anaesthetists, neonatologists and midwives representing the NHS across the UK.

Celebrities who support Baby Lifeline, including Dame Barbara Windsor, Georgia Tennant, Jimmi Harkishin, Nick Owen, Eric Knowles, and Elizabeth Emanuel will also be in attendance.

### **About Baby Lifeline**

Baby Lifeline is a unique national charity supporting the care of pregnant women and new-born babies across the UK and worldwide. It raises funds to purchase much-needed maternity equipment and is one of the leading providers of training to the medical and legal professions. It has attracted the support of leading health figures who sit on the charity’s board, and A-list celebrities as patrons, including Sir Ben Kingsley and Dame Judi Dench.

### **About the Monitoring For Mums campaign**

The 'Monitoring For Mums' campaign aims to raise funds, region by region, for important training and technology to provide mothers and babies with the best maternity care possible. [Baby Lifeline](#) has received applications for funding from the majority of NHS maternity units, with more than half asking for important monitoring equipment and associated training for staff. Donations can provide equipment for safer pregnancies and births. Equipment funding requests have so far totalled more than £4.5m. The campaign is also calling for a new standardised in-house hospital training programme be devised for maternity units across the UK.

#### **About our founder – Judy Ledger**

Judy Ledger qualified as a state registered nurse in 1978 and has suffered the heartache of losing her baby during pregnancy not just once, but on three occasions. Wanting to do something to help with her grief, and support medical professionals who looked after her, she launched the Baby Lifeline Charity, campaigning to ensure the best care for pregnant women and their babies by helping to provide equipment, specialist training and support research projects which could have a high impact on the quality of maternity care. Judy has received various awards for her work with the charity, including a Pride of Britain Award for fundraising in 2010.

**For further details, or to request attendance at Thursday's event on our media table, please call Paul Baxter on 07944 035044 or Judy Ledger on 07932 102403**