



monitoring
for mums appeal

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Maternity care specialists unite in supporting campaign aiming to improve training and equipment in hospitals across the UK and reduce avoidable injuries and deaths on wards

A campaign calling for a new national standardisation of training for maternity providers across the UK has won the support of leading specialists who believe it has the potential to save hundreds of lives each year.

Launching its 'Monitoring for Mums' appeal, the charity Baby Lifeline UK is calling for a greater focus on in-house training across NHS Trusts, ensuring all deliver the same, relevant programmes covering key areas of maternity care.

It coincides with the launch of a nationwide appeal 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 – with the requests of each individual hospital Trust documented on the campaign website, on which people can donate funds to their local hospital.

The campaign comes after research, conducted with the support of The University of Hull, saw more than half of 125 Trusts which answered questions as part of a Freedom of Information request admit to providing four days or less of in-house mandatory maternity training every year.

Many were found to place a heavy reliance on e-learning and had poor, or non-existent, evaluation of training programmes.

Baby Lifeline says there was no consistency over which areas of maternity care were being classed as 'mandatory' for training at Trusts, with only 50 of the 125 highlighting new-born screening as part of their training.

Less than a quarter of Trusts highlighted teamwork and communication in obstetric emergencies as being part of mandatory training. Training was also found to be being delivered in different ways from Trust to Trust, with no clear standardisation of topics, duration of training, method of delivery, frequency or assessment.

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.”

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.

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.

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.

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.”

Dr William Parry-Smith is a Clinical Research Fellow and Specialist Registrar in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, based at the Institute of Metabolism and Systems Research, College of Medical & Dental Sciences at The University of Birmingham.

He said: "I believe that the combination of enhancing frontline NHS maternity staff's training, while simultaneously providing much-needed fetal monitoring equipment, is a strategy that should improve outcomes for both mothers and their babies.

"I support the appeal as a strategy to help reduce the tragedy of stillbirth and early neonatal death and commend the vision and determination of Baby Lifeline."

Dr Felicity Plaat, Consultant Obstetric Anaesthetist at Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital, London, said: "There is overwhelming evidence that multidisciplinary training improves outcomes in maternity and this is part of this campaign that I completely support.

"Monitoring to ensure good outcomes and prevent catastrophe is what I do as an anaesthetist. "The stats are clear. It is a lot more hazardous being born than having an anaesthetic, so it makes complete sense to monitor babies during the process."

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 35th 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