

**EMBARGOED UNTIL TUESDAY 5 JUNE 2018, 00:01AM**

**INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE**

## **BABIES DYING IN HOSPITALS AND THE COMMUNITY BECAUSE NHS STAFF LACK TRAINING**

Babies are dying because some frontline NHS staff are not being adequately trained to deal with emergencies during pregnancy and childbirth, a group of maternity experts warn today.

A lack of training for NHS health professionals is contributing to over 1,000 healthy babies dying or acquiring severe brain injuries every year in the UK – three a day, the experts claim. In around 75 per cent (three out of every four) of these cases, it is thought that different care might have prevented the result.

To protect mothers and their newborn babies, the expert group – convened by [Baby Lifeline](#), a charity that campaigns for better maternity training – is calling on the Department of Health and Social Care to urgently invest more in training, and for all NHS Trusts to standardise maternity training for key frontline staff.

In 2016/17, the NHS paid £2.2 billion for claims relating to clinical negligence in obstetric care. Whilst maternity claims account for only 10 per cent of the total claims against the NHS, they represent half of the total expenditure. This has prompted the Government to commit to halving the number of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries in babies by 2030, with a 20 per cent reduction by 2020.

NHS mandatory training focuses on basic aspects of clinical care and management of emergencies such as hand hygiene, manual handling and adult resuscitation, and not on specific skills such as monitoring a baby's heart rate or neonatal resuscitation. It also does not include aspects of teamwork such as communication, human factors and conflict resolution, which can prevent emergencies arising or escalating.

The group, chaired by Professor James Drife, a former Vice-President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, is calling for the Government to standardise training for all maternity staff across the UK. It follows research by Baby Lifeline that found significant variations in the methods and frequency of training.

A Freedom of Information request sent to all NHS Trusts in England showed that more than half of Trusts provided just four days or less of in-house mandatory maternity training every year, with many relying heavily on e-learning and poor, or non-existent, evaluation of training programmes.

Judy Ledger, the founder of Baby Lifeline who lost three babies during pregnancy and childbirth, said that a lack of standardised training was putting the lives of women and babies at risk, as well as costing the NHS billions of pounds in clinical negligence claims.

“It simply cannot be right that training provision varies so widely between hospital Trusts in England, in terms of which topics are offered and how they are provided,” said Ledger. “Decades of reports investigating neonatal deaths, stillbirths and clinical negligence in maternity are starkly

similar in their findings – 75 per cent of baby deaths are preventable. The NHS must do more to bring this figure down.”

She added: “Training doesn’t just save lives, it also saves precious NHS Funds. Analysis of a pilot scheme carried out by Baby Lifeline in Peterborough has showed that a modest £12,000 investment in multidisciplinary training created savings of almost £1 million over three years. Scaling that up nationally would have a hugely positive impact both on lives and NHS resources, at a time when so many parts of the NHS are under financial pressure.”

Dr William Parry-Smith, a Registrar Obstetrician and Gynaecologist in the West Midlands Deanery and Trustee of Baby Lifeline, said: “Right now three babies a day are dying or injured during birth. In over 75 per cent of these cases, different care might have avoided babies dying. The NHS is not without options for first class maternity training and care. I have seen first-hand the positive impact that joint training, between obstetricians and midwives, can have upon the outcomes for both babies and their mothers.”

He added: “Baby Lifeline has trained 21,000 medical professionals since starting our courses, including 6,000 in the past year. And this means that it is uniquely placed to provide the required training, across the board to paramedics, midwives, obstetricians and everyone in between. Our sessions encourage the exchange of best-practice between professionals. And they foster stronger teams which more effectively communicate. Babies and their mothers deserve first-class care from conception to the cot and beyond.”

Claire Fitzpatrick, a trainee midwife at London South Bank University, said: “Time spent in the hospital and university has provided me with an abundance of experience and knowledge. However, multi-disciplinary training, which is provided by Baby Lifeline, ensures a safe environment for all Student Midwives to consolidate our learning. It has allowed me to gain the confidence in obstetric emergencies and I feel such training should be available to all front-line practitioners to ensure that they can give the best care to women and their babies and help prevent avoidable deaths and injuries.”

- ENDS -

### Notes to Editors

#### For further information and interview requests, contact:

**Sara Ledger**, Research and Development Manager, Baby Lifeline Training

Email: [training@babylifeline.org.uk](mailto:training@babylifeline.org.uk)

Telephone: 01676 534671

### About the Expert Group

The Expert Group was convened by Baby Lifeline to consider the findings of the charity’s report into gaps in maternity training in NHS Trusts in England. The members of the group are:

- **Professor James Drife (Chair)**, Former Vice-President of The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG); Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology; Consultant for the World Health Organisation; Former Honorary President, Baby Lifeline

- **Mr Kim Hinshaw**, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Director of Research and Innovation, Sunderland Royal Hospital Tyne and Wear; Visiting Professor, University of Sunderland; Education Officer, British Maternal & Fetal Medicine Society; Honorary Faculty Chair, Baby Lifeline
- **Professor Julie Jomeen**, Dean: Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Hull
- **Dr Caroline Knight**, Trainee Representative, British Maternal and Fetal Medicine Society
- **Mrs Judy Ledger**, CEO and Founder, Baby Lifeline; CEO and Founder, Baby Lifeline Training
- **Ms Sara Ledger**, Research and Development Manager, Baby Lifeline Training; Honorary Research Associate, University of Hull
- **Ms Carmel Lloyd**, Head of Education and Learning, Royal College of Midwives
- **Dr Michael Magro**, Previous Darzi Fellow, NHS Litigation Authority, Safety and Learning Team
- **Ms Bernadette McGhie**, Executive Director, Enable Law
- **Mr Edward Morris**, Vice President, Clinical Quality, Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists
- **Dr William Parry-Smith**, Education Board, Council, Royal College of Gynaecologists; Trustee, Baby Lifeline
- **Dr Felicity Plaat**, President Elect, Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association
- **Professor James Walker**, Professor in the University Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, St James University Hospital; Former Vice-President of RCOG; National Professional Advisor (Maternity), Care Quality Commission; Honorary President, Baby Lifeline Training

### 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 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.