

Northern Ireland's £200k spending on training maternity staff is highest in UK: report



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By **Lisa Smyth**

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Research from charity Baby Lifeline reveals the mean average spend on maternity training here in the last financial year was almost £200,000.

This was considerably higher than other regions, including Scotland where the spending was just £7,100, while the national mean average was £59,000.

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The charity has said the figures show that mothers and babies are at risk because of a critical lack of front line staff training and they highlight a postcode lottery when it comes to the safety of patients.

While Northern Ireland fares well when it comes to spending on maternity training, the figures come after statistics revealed the largest proportion of negligence claims being dealt with by the NHS last year related to failings in the treatment of pregnant women.

More than half of the £116.7m paid out from open claims last year went towards settling claims relating to care provided to expectant mums, according to the figures from the Department of Health.

In its report accompanying its research, Baby Lifeline has made a series of recommendations to improve maternity care.

And Patrick Mullarkey, a partner at Belfast-based O'Reilly Stewart Solicitors, said despite spending on training here, more still needs to be done to reduce the risk to pregnant women and their babies.

"It is a sobering and shocking statistic that three out of four baby deaths are preventable with different care," he said.

"Behind those figures are the individual tragedies for the babies, their parents and wider families involved.

"As solicitors specialising in this field see many of these cases, where babies have been stillborn or have sustained life-changing injuries, and it is unfortunately clear that such deaths and serious injuries have occurred and will continue to occur whilst the deficits in training identified persist.

"The cost of provision of the resources to facilitate such training must pale in comparison to the costs, financial and human, borne by the trusts, their staff and their patients as a consequence of these failures.

"We wholeheartedly endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the report."

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