

“PERSONAL TRAGEDY GAVE ME THE STRENGTH TO HELP OTHERS”

Judy Ledger, 61, founder and CEO of Baby Lifeline, tells us why the charity is so important to her



Judy Ledger with her daughter Sara, who was born prematurely and cared for by Baby Lifeline

BIG GIVE 2018
Candis

Baby Lifeline

TOTAL RAISED
£32,656

THE FACTS

- **Baby Lifeline supports the care of pregnant women and newborn babies worldwide by raising funds to purchase maternity equipment, training maternity healthcare providers and carrying out relevant research to improve care.**
- **The nationwide Monitoring for Mums appeal is fundraising to provide £5 million for mother and baby units (monitoringformums.co.uk).**
- **The charity works with leading health and legal professionals, as well as hospitals, to identify and prioritise equipment needs for the maternity sector.**
- **To find out more information, go to babylifeline.org.uk.**

Back in 1978, I was 21 and training to be a nurse. My husband, Graham, and I lived in the grounds of Coventry Hospital. During my training, I became pregnant – at first, everything seemed fine but at 23 weeks I began to feel unwell. Over the course of a week, I was

admitted to A&E three times, only to be told I had a urinary tract infection. The pains increased and I was rushed to maternity as an emergency case. My baby daughter Lisa was born at almost 24 weeks but died during birth. Lisa was taken away for a post mortem and then incinerated, I didn't even get to see her. It was what the midwives thought was best. Afterwards, I suffered dizzy spells and panic attacks – I'm sure because of what had happened. I conceived again within a year only to find myself in the same nightmare when I went into labour at just over 25 weeks and my daughter Emma was born. I could see her but she was gravely ill and taken into the neonatal unit. She was so tiny that she couldn't be intubated and died within 24 hours. I felt completely numb. A few months later, I became pregnant again and the consultant took really good care of me. But despite being given the drug Ritrodrene to stop premature labour, my son Stuart was born at 28 weeks. He was whisked away to the baby unit and although they did everything they could, Stuart died the next day.

To take my mind off what had happened I threw myself into raising money for the maternity unit by any means I could, from sourcing raffle prizes to organising nights out.

The fact that I was a trained nurse meant I could do things a little differently. Instead of working alongside the public or bereaved parents, I approached health professionals and built the charity on valid report findings, their advice and requests. The first thing we bought for the ward was a state-of-the-art incubator. It cost £7,000 and I'm still in touch with the first baby who used it.

A year after starting the charity, I gave birth to Richard, now 36. At just two weeks premature he was healthy and I was overwhelmed to be a mum



Judy with Paul Edwards, the first baby to use an incubator she raised funds for in 1981

at long last. Although Graham and I parted when Richard was two, we have remained great friends. I went on to meet my husband, Tim, a lawyer, through the charity, after he won a prize in one of my raffles! Tim and I got married in 1986 and now have two wonderful children, James, 32, who lives in Australia, and Sara, 28, who works alongside Baby Lifeline with training in conjunction with Hull University. Both were born prematurely and cared for in baby units funded by Baby Lifeline.

Back in 1990, a London consultant suggested the importance of specialist staff training. He said that new reports such as the *Confidential Enquiry into Stillbirths and Deaths in Infants* (CESDI) found that an average of one baby a day was dying in the UK due to human error. Following our extensive research, it was agreed all care providers for pregnant women and newborns – regardless of their position within the medical profession – would be given the same training. With his help and the support of the health professionals already on board, we produced a series of videos which were sent all over the world, including India and Pakistan. Four years later, I worked with a professor to arrange educational conferences, and our maternity health professional training took off from there. Always working on

recommendations from report findings, we brought all the disciplines together and now train midwives, obstetricians, obstetric anaesthetists, GPs, specialist lawyers and latterly paramedics, as in-depth training for first responders is crucial.

We also provide training to the North West Ambulance Trust, amongst other regions. Shortly after his training, a paramedic emailed to say he'd attended an emergency maternity case and used the procedures covered on our course. As a consequence, mother and baby were safe and well, which was so rewarding to hear.

Last year we received some funding via the NHS Trust for maternity safety training and have been working closely with Hull University to research the efficacy of our training. We were bombarded with training requests and managed to train over 6,000 people in 12 months! Our mission is to ensure the healthiest outcome possible from pregnancy and birth. To do that you must help in ways that will really make an impact, from foetal monitoring, providing bilirubin meters for special care babies (to measure jaundice), to a foetal scanner, which we've just bought for Birmingham Women's hospital. Then there's the training that surrounds all this equipment, it all follows a pattern and there's research attached to each facet.

It's taken 37 years but I'm now ready to buy a headstone to remember the babies I lost to prematurity – after all, everything that we've achieved with Baby Lifeline has been inspired by them and it feels like the right time to do it. In the future, I'd like Baby Lifeline to go from strength to strength to ensure the very best care for pregnant mums and newborn babies for many generations to come. ✨



Judy enjoys spending time with her family, especially now she is a grandmother



In 2010, the actor Ben Kingsley presented Judy with a Pride of Britain Award

THE CANDIS BIG GIVE

The £32,656 raised in the Candis Big Give is being used to help prevent stillbirth and neonatal deaths and to avoid preventable brain injuries in newborn babies by providing equipment and training to maternity units across the UK.

THE CANDIS BIG GIVE

AS TOLD TO SALLY EVANS

DONATIONS TO DATE

We never forget it's YOUR subscriptions that enable Candis Club to give huge amounts to charities. Our running total shows how much

£31,620,386
to the Cancer and Polio Research Fund (1962 to 2002)

£4,429,597
to the National Asthma Campaign (1990 to 2002)

£5,500,979
to Marie Curie Cancer Care (1998 to 2012)

£3,304,767
to Macmillan Cancer Support (1993 to 2013)

£3,309,982
to Bliss, the special care baby charity (1990 to 2009)

£2,190,977
to Liverpool University's Cancer Tissue Bank Research Centre (1989 to 1993)

£1,549,998
to the British Heart Foundation (2002 to 2008)

£914,053
to local groups via the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) (1990 to 2009)

£220,000
to ICAN (1989)

£246,876
to Tommy's, the baby charity (2006 to 2009)

£303,774
to Children's Hospices UK (2008 to 2010)

£2,000,000
to charities in The Candis Big Give

TOTAL TO DATE
£55,591,389

Make a difference

We've highlighted some of the charities taking part in The Candis Big Give. For a full list, and details of the life-changing projects they're raising money for, visit candis.co.uk/charity

Dreamflight

What it does: Raises money to take ill or disabled children to Florida.

Candis Big Give project: To send 16 children on a trip of a lifetime.

Location: National

Total raised: £62,832

Sebastian's Action Trust

What it does: Supports ill children and families and offers free holidays.

Candis Big Give Project: To develop a family outreach hub for advice.

Location: Berkshire

Total raised: £27,000

Spinal Muscular Atrophy Support UK

What it does: Supports people affected by muscular atrophy.

Candis Big Give Project: To support youths suffering with the condition.

Location: National

Total raised: £13,670

The Brain Tumour Charity

What it does: Funds research, raises awareness and provides support to sufferers.

Candis Big Give Project: To launch an early-diagnosis campaign to ensure early treatment which should increase survival rates.

Location: National

Total raised: £62,580

The Clatterbridge Cancer Charity

What it does: The only dedicated charity for patients and research into cancer.

Candis Big Give project: To provide two rooms at the new specialist cancer hospital in Liverpool.

Location: North West

Total raised: £45,427

Theodora Children's Charity

What it does: Improves the lives of children in hospital through weekly visits from trained entertainers called Giggle Doctors.

Candis Big Give Project: To fund visits to 30,000 children, helping to distract them from pain and fear through music, magic and laughter.

Location: National

Total raised: £75,484

HOW BUYING A SUBSCRIPTION HELPS...

In 2018, Candis Club will donate at least £250,000 from members' magazine subscription revenue via The Big Give to health charities taking part in The Candis Big Give. Any additional funds will go to charities at the discretion of the General Committee of Candis Club.