

The Training Gap: Consensus Statement

Background

An expert group convened by Baby Lifeline (BL) met on 16th January 2017 to consider how the NHS should respond to the report of an investigation into gaps in maternity training in NHS Trusts in England. A Freedom of Information request sent to all Trusts in England had revealed wide variations in the methods and frequency of maternity training, and in the topics offered. The report, *Mind the Gap*¹, concluded that there is a need for standardised, high-quality, effective maternity team training across the UK.

The expert group

The group, chaired by a former vice-president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), was made up of experts in midwifery, obstetrics, anaesthesia and litigation, all in active practice. They included the Professional Advisor on Education from the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), the current RCOG Vice-President for Clinical Quality, the trainees' representative on the RCOG Council, and representatives from NHS Resolution (formerly the NHSLA) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). (See Appendix.)

Peer Review

This Consensus Statement was finalised in June 2017 and has been reviewed by the RCOG, the RCM, the British Maternal and Fetal Medicine Society, the Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association and NHS Resolution. It is supported by all these organisations.

Recommendations

The Expert Group strongly agrees with the *Mind the Gap* report's conclusion that there is a need for effective maternity team training across the country, with some agreed standardisation. After reflection and consultation, the group agreed the following recommendations.

1. Each Trust/maternity service should have a formal lead for multidisciplinary education, who should be accountable to the Trust Board for the provision of team training and for reporting on its effectiveness.

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2. To assess its effectiveness, training should be linked to outcomes. These are mainly clinical but should also include metrics of staff confidence and satisfaction, such as recruitment and retention. The CQC states that staff must receive the training they need to help them do their job², and a catalogue of approved training packages has been produced by Health Education England³. Further work is, needed, however, on the evaluation of training, using new outcome measures, maternity dashboards, etc.
3. Currently, NHS “mandatory training” is mostly generic (eg. hand hygiene, resuscitation), often lacks an agreed definition, and is not specialty specific. Mandatory training should not be confined to elementary aspects of clinical care and management of emergencies. It should also include aspects of teamwork such as communication, human factors and conflict resolution, which can prevent emergencies from arising or escalating. Training should also be targeted to emerging areas of poor practice identified by audit and review⁴, in order to improve outcomes at unit level and ultimately reduce litigation costs to the NHS.
4. Trusts and directorates must ensure that time is made available for training – both for staff attending the sessions and for the trainers, who are also working clinicians. Action and oversight at Trust Board level will be necessary to balance time for giving and receiving training against the competing demands of the clinical service. Guidance at national level will be needed to help Trust Boards achieve this.
5. Training should include assessment of skill acquisition, with support in place for those who do not meet the standard. At present, training sessions are monitored only by a log of attendance but there are few repercussions for staff who fail to attend. The professional codes for clinical staff require them to keep up to date, as failure to do so may put patients at risk. Any concerns for patient safety should lead Trust Boards to strongly consider removing staff from front-line clinical care until training has been undertaken and assessment confirms an appropriate level of skills has been achieved.

Summary

Although there are some regional and local examples of high-quality maternity team training, the vitally important area of “team skills” is generally given a low priority by the NHS. In

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other public services and industries where lives are at stake and litigation rates are high, team training is now part of their core business. We hope our recommendations will help the NHS to do likewise. It is a step change which is long overdue.

References

1. Mind the Gap: an investigation into the Training Gap between NHS Trusts in England.
<http://babylifeline.org.uk/home/about-us/what-we-do/mind-the-gap/>
2. <http://www.cqc.org.uk/content/regulation-18-staffing#guidance>
3. Maternal Safety Catalogue
<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Maternity%20Safety%20Training%20Catalogue.pdf>
4. NHS Resolution and the Maternity Transformation Board are developing a consensus quality dashboard that will help in the evaluation of outcomes.

APPENDIX - Expert Group Members

Professor James Drife (Chair)

Former President, Baby Lifeline; Former Vice-President of RCOG; Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology; Consultant for the World Health Organisation

Mr Kim Hinshaw

Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, Director of Research & Innovation, Sunderland Royal Hospital Tyne & Wear; Visiting Professor, University of Sunderland; Education Officer, British Maternal & Fetal Medicine Society; Honorary Faculty Chair, Baby Lifeline – BIRTH2 Training Initiative

Professor Julie Jomeen

Dean: Faculty of Health Sciences, Professor of Midwifery, University of Hull

Dr Caroline Knight

Trainee Representative, British Maternal & Fetal Medicine Society

Mrs Judy Ledger

CEO & Founder, Baby Lifeline; CEO & Founder, Baby Lifeline Training

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Former Darzi Fellow, NHS Resolution, Safety and Learning Team

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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 Platt

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Professor in the University Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, St James University Hospital;
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Honorary President, Baby Lifeline Training

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