

NEWS RELEASE



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INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE

NHS MUST FUND URGENT TRAINING TO SAVE BABIES' LIVES, ACCORDING TO NEW REPORT

NHS facing claims of £1 million per day more in medical negligence compensation than is spent on delivering babies

Mothers and babies are at risk because of a critical lack of frontline staff training, according to a new report published today (Tuesday 6 November) by maternity charity Baby Lifeline.

Judy Ledger, Founder and Chief Executive of Baby Lifeline said: "This is a unique report researching training delivered on the front line. It highlights the training actually delivered in the last financial year rather than showing the intentions of Trusts to provide it. The report shows there is a clear difference between what is said is being done and what is happening, and we're highlighting this so that action can be taken for the benefit of mothers and their babies."

Mind the Gap: An Investigation into the Maternity Training Gap Between NHS Trusts in the UK was compiled by *Baby Lifeline* to provide an overall picture of maternity training in the NHS. The report reviews the extent to which existing guidance and recommendations on maternity training are being followed by NHS Trusts, in the light of government ambitions to halve stillbirths, neonatal deaths and harm by 2025.

The NHS currently faces claims of £2.1 billion on maternity-related clinical negligence cases (2017-18 figures), compared with the £1.9 billion per year that is spent on delivering babies.

The *Mind the Gap* report notes that most baby deaths and injuries (between 76-79 per cent) investigated by national bodies are avoidable with different care, and that training of frontline staff can have a significant impact in reducing this amount. It references the positive impact of high quality training on saving lives, but found that maternity training spending varied widely from £1,051.66 annually at one NHS Trust to £372,878.00 in another (July 2017-July 2018).

The figures were gathered by *Baby Lifeline* through a Freedom of Information request sent to all NHS Trusts in the UK, in July 2018.

There are around 665,000 babies born in England each year, but despite falling to its lowest rate in 20 years, there are around 3,000 stillbirths, with one in every 200 babies stillborn.

Guidance on tackling stillbirths, first published in 2016 is known as the *Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle*, and advises intervening to reduce cigarette smoking, detecting small babies, informing women about reduced fetal movements and improving monitoring during labour.

NHS England said it can prevent over 600 stillbirths a year, when properly adopted by all Trusts.

But figures published in *Mind the Gap*, reveal that only 7.9 per cent of the UK's NHS Trusts have adopted the training guidance within the *Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle*. It is calling for the guidance to be mandatory and to be rolled out across the UK.

Judy Ledger, the Founder of Baby Lifeline who lost three babies during pregnancy and childbirth, said: "Time and again the importance of training is highlighted in national reports on neonatal deaths and maternity injuries. Mothers and babies are still needlessly dying, or suffering serious injury, because of a lack of relevant training in the NHS. The Government simply won't achieve its target of halving stillbirths, neonatal deaths, and reducing harm by 2025 without mandating staff training, and properly funding it."

She added: "Our report shows that the one-off £8.1 million in funding the Government gave to Trusts for maternity training in 2017 has had an impact, but it was a drop in the ocean. At the very least, the reduction of one negligence case through proper training would be a life and money saved."

Dr William Parry-Smith, a Registrar Obstetrician and Gynaecologist in the West Midlands Deanery and Trustee of Baby Lifeline, said: "That the NHS is facing more in claims for obstetric clinical negligence than on delivering babies is nothing short of a national scandal. We're calling for this to change, and for training to be standardised, mandated and properly funded. 15 babies are stillborn every day or die in their first 28 days of life, and with proper training this doesn't have to be the case".

"Baby Lifeline's report shows that there are still unacceptable variations in training that staff receive and there's no consistency in Trusts' spending. The focus needs to be on ensuring maternity staff across the country are consistently given the opportunities they need to be prepared to save lives. The evidence is clear: with whole teams properly trained, the number of stillbirths, neonatal deaths and severe brain injuries can be halved. And that's just the start of what we should be achieving," he said.

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Notes to Editors

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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 Dame Judi Dench and David Tennant.

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.

About *Mind the Gap*

After a number of reports stating a stark difference in neonatal mortality and stillbirth rates across England, and observations on a number of Baby Lifeline courses, Baby Lifeline became increasingly concerned with a lack of standardisation in care and wanted to investigate. In November 2015, Baby Lifeline sent out Freedom of Information requests to all NHS Trusts in England to gain a better understanding of mandatory and non-mandatory training offered by Trusts, including the governance, available budgets, training topics, and frequency, duration, assessment, and delivery of training. In March 2016 researchers from the University of Hull and Baby Lifeline began to order, analyse, and evaluate the responses received from Trusts.

In January 2017, following the publication of *Mind the Gap* Baby Lifeline convened an expert group to consider how the NHS should respond to the investigation's findings. The expert group, involving leading specialists in midwifery, obstetrics, anaesthesia and litigation, all in active practice, produced a [consensus statement](#). The group produced a series of recommendations for the delivery of high-quality maternity team training.

In 2018 Baby Lifeline published *Mind the Gap: An Investigation into the Maternity Training Gap Between NHS Trusts in the UK*, in follow-up to its 2016 report.