

Nursing Times

Trial launched of new community midwife equipment bag

1 March, 2019

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A charity has today launched a trial of a standardised equipment bag for community midwives after a survey found more than one in three do not have access to all the kit they need.

Mother and baby charity, Baby Lifeline, is set to trial new equipment bags across six trusts in April, after its survey identified that 40% of midwives working in the community had bags that didn't meet all their needs.

"Every midwife should have access to the equipment needed to deliver safe and effective care"

Judy Ledger

Concerns over staff bags were first flagged up during the charity's work to provide specialist training to community midwives and paramedics up and down the country. To help better understand the problem, the charity decided to carry out a survey which looked at the variation in contents and equipment that the community staff carried.

From the results, the charity heard that 35% of midwives had to purchase their own home birth bags, while others had them provided through their employer.

Furthermore, 30% stated that they felt the bag they used wasn't safe and 27% reported that they felt they didn't carry all the equipment they need.

The bags used by survey respondents ranged from plastic clinical waste bags which held only "a few bits and pieces", to a "fully equipped tool chest", noted the charity.

In response to the survey results, a team of healthcare professionals, including frontline midwives, paramedics and obstetricians, worked together, under the charity, to develop a standardised equipment bag, along with a process to ensure supplies are always kept up to date.

The project, which was funded by the Fawsley Birth Centre charity, saw the healthcare team design a rucksack style bag, with adjustable straps and optional wheels.

The contents includes scissors to cut the cord, a hat and towels to dry and warm the newborn, as well as equipment for emergencies.

The bag is compartmentalised and colour coded to ensure equipment is easily accessible and identifiable for staff.

The trial of the new equipment and process will be carried out by midwives in six trusts across the UK and will start next month.

In total, 42 of the bags will be trialled in the follow trusts and health boards: Barts Health, Hywel Dda University, Kettering General Hospital, Medway, North Cumbria University Hospitals, and partners City Hospitals Sunderland and South Tyneside. The Royal Devon and Exeter were also part of the development team.

Baby Lifeline founder and chief executive, Judy Ledger, said: "Baby Lifeline believes that every woman who gives birth in the community, no matter where in the country she is, should have access to the same essential equipment through her midwife.

"Equally, every midwife should have access to the equipment needed to deliver safe and effective care," she added. "This is what we are working to achieve through this project."

To mark its official launch, Baby Lifeline is hosting a special event today in London in which stars of the BBC 'Call the Midwife' series are set to attend.

Actresses from the series, Linda Bassett and Leonie Elliot, who play nurses Phyllis Crane and Lucille Anderson, will join the six midwives who are leading the launch, at a lunch prepared by the charity's celebrity ambassador and Michelin-starred chef, Shaun Rankin.