

# Fundraising to achieve holistic specialist care



The NICU at Bath's Royal United Hospital (RUH) is currently at the forefront of The Forever Friends Appeal's fundraising efforts. Providing acute care for families across an area encompassing Chippenham, Malmesbury, Warminster and Glastonbury, the busy unit has outgrown its facilities – considered state-of-the-art when it was built 30 years ago.

The current NICU has an excellent clinical team and its performance ranks in the top 10% of NICUs across the UK. However, cramped conditions and a lack of facilities for involving parents in the care of their babies are just two of the problems facing those who use it.

With this in mind The Forever Friends Appeal, the hospital's independent charity, has been running the appropriately-named NICU 'Space to Grow' campaign to raise the funds needed to build a new, pioneering and environmentally sustainable NICU at the RUH. The project, costing £6.1 million, will provide much needed space and facilitate a holistic and therapeutic approach to the care of tiny babies, while creating a low carbon unit for the future.

To date, £4.7 million has been generated through the fundraising efforts of the Appeal and the RUH. Now, The Forever Friends Appeal is busy raising the last £1.3 million needed to complete the NICU and have it ready by early 2011.

With input from a multidisciplinary team of architects, clinicians and the RUH management, architects Feilden Clegg Bradley have designed a unit that brings sustainability to the fore and should serve as a template for the future of 'green'



It is hoped the unit will serve as a template for green NHS facilities in future.



Nicolas Cage visited the unit to lend his support to the campaign.

healthcare buildings in the NHS.

The building of a larger unit with better facilities has been only part of the equation. Environmentally, the method and materials for the build have been given substantial consideration while the new surroundings will result in some important psychological benefits for parents, their babies and the staff who care for them.

## An holistic approach

The anticipated structure of the new NICU will facilitate an holistic approach – combining scientific and clinical expertise, optimum space and environment, sustainable building design and operation – to the care of premature babies. It will also enable the more effective use of developmental care techniques such as kangaroo care, noise reduction and increased privacy for breastfeeding.

In taking an holistic approach to neonatal care every element of the build must be carefully considered. Separating the new build from the existing NICU will allow the development to be completed with minimum disruption. The new NICU design will be clear and logical, zoned for the functions each area is to accommodate, with clear divisions for infection control and access.

A spacious, direct route will connect the

current Princess Anne Wing delivery suite to NICU. Care rooms will be grouped around a central staff base and will contain 21 cots, four in intensive care, three in high dependency, four in each of three special care rooms and one isolation room. These spacious rooms will help staff to give effective care to each patient while visiting families should benefit from the comfort and privacy offered. The clockwise circuit of rooms follows the pattern of care, beginning with intensive care, then high dependency, then special care and finally parent rooms and home. These areas will be carefully lit and decorated to allow the perception of changing external conditions day and night.

Parent rooms and staff space will be much improved. Four parent suites are planned, one equipped for treatment, grouped around a communal living area and kitchen opening onto a courtyard area, allowing parents solitude or the chance to share experiences with other parents. Staff space will facilitate open plan working with quiet rooms for private conversations, phone calls or simply to work.

This holistic approach aims to improve the immediate and long-term health prognosis for premature babies and families and to establish the first NICU of its kind in the UK.

## Taking on the fundraising challenge

The Appeal has explored a wide variety of fundraising methods including the introduction of corporate and community partnerships, major gifts, direct mail and door drops and a very busy events calendar.

In addition, the Appeal has come up with innovative fundraising initiatives to enable people to contribute, the main focus being a Buy a 'Baby' Brick Scheme. More than 500 babies use the RUH NICU every year and this initiative has enabled friends, family and colleagues to make a significant contribution to the campaign.

The scheme has been promoted throughout 2009 and encouraged individuals, businesses and community groups to sign up and Buy a 'Baby' Brick for £10, a row for £100 or even a 'Baby' Brick wall for £1,000. Donors receive a certificate and their name permanently acknowledged within the build of the unit.

This has proved a successful fundraising approach that will continue throughout the life of the project to create a roll of honour in the finished building. Since its launch in July 2009, Buy a 'Baby' Brick has raised nearly £40,000 and continues to appeal to supporters.

The scheme has attracted the attention of a number of celebrities, including Susan Hampshire, Felicity Kendall and Patrick Stewart, who have offered their support for the campaign. Heartbeat actor Jason Durr has signed up to the scheme after his twins were treated on the unit last year.

One of the major events in the Appeal's events calendar is an annual fundraising day – Ted's Big Day Out! The third Friday in October sees individuals and



Architects have taken 'green' issues into account, as well as the need for an holistic environment.

organisations across the RUH catchment area pay £1 to take their teddy out for the day and raise funds for the hospital. The last two fundraising days were both in aid of RUH NICU and thanks to the Buy a 'Baby' Brick scheme, Ted's Big Day Out! 2009 attracted A-list celebrity and Oscar-winning actor Nicolas Cage.

Mr Cage, his wife Kim and four-year-old Kal-el were welcomed by a thrilled appeal team to help celebrate the 10th anniversary of the fundraising day. Mr Cage joined in the spirit of the day by bringing his own teddy along, signing autographs and giving a short speech about the wonderful work of staff in the unit, despite the current facilities.

After his visit Mr Cage said: "I feel so privileged to be here supporting this amazing cause. Parents need to be able to spend time with their children and at the moment, conditions are too cramped for them to be able to do this comfortably. This magical bonding time between a parent and child is so important and the



Fiona Bruce shows her support for the Buy a 'Baby' Brick scheme.

new NICU will enable this to happen."

Mr Cage's support and visit to the RUH made a great difference to the NICU Space to Grow campaign, helping to put the need for a new NICU at the top of the regional agenda. With groundworks already underway, the Appeal is continuing to recruit as many people as possible to help make the unit a reality and open by summer 2011.

The Forever Friends Appeal and the RUH have responded to the need for a new neonatal intensive care unit by undertaking a unique and pioneering campaign. This unit will enable clinicians to establish the most up-to-date approaches to neonatal care to help improve the experiences of our tiniest patients and their families.

For more information, or to find out how you can make a difference, visit [www.foreverfriendsappeal.co.uk](http://www.foreverfriendsappeal.co.uk).



Pre-prep pupils at Bath's Kingswood Prep School have pledged to fundraise for their own 'wall.'

### Is your unit special?

Why not contribute to our focus on a unit feature?  
Contact [kate@infantgrapevine.co.uk](mailto:kate@infantgrapevine.co.uk)