

NEWS FROM BLISS



Staff shortages could jeopardise plans to raise care standards

Bliss welcomes the launch of the NHS Neonatal Taskforce in England which hopes to make the care of sick newborn babies an NHS priority for the next decade. However, it has highlighted a shortfall of over 2,700 nurses and 300 supporting therapists, says Bliss.

“These standards are a welcome first step, but there is still a long way to go,” the charity warns. “We are concerned that with the lack of upfront investment, this could be another wasted opportunity to deliver

the care that vulnerable babies need.”

Bliss is a member of the NHS Neonatal Taskforce and sat on each of its four working groups. It welcomes many of the document’s key recommendations, in particular: one-to-one nursing for babies in ICU; a strategy for recruiting and retaining staff; support in the community after discharge from hospital; safe and effective transfers for newborn babies; and a much needed focus on the care of the whole family by healthcare professionals.



Bliss welcomes Dr Jane Hawdon to board of trustees

Bliss has appointed Dr Jane Hawdon, Consultant Neonatologist at University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (above), to its board of trustees.

Dr Hawdon’s appointment will draw on her personal experiences as a mother of three, as well as her extensive clinical knowledge and expertise in the neonatal field. Her eight-year-old son Harvey was born prematurely. Dr Hawdon, who is clinical lead for the North Central Perinatal Network, is one of five new trustees.

Bliss funds NIDCAP professional nurse

Janet O’Connell, neonatal nurse at Addenbrookes Hospital, is the first nurse to graduate from the UK NIDCAP centre and is currently the only nurse in the UK with full “NIDCAP Professional” status.

Inga Warren, who trained Janet at the Winnicott Unit in London, said: “Janet has proved herself to be a worthy beneficiary of Bliss’ support. She is an excellent leader, coach and mentor who will be an inspiration to many others. I feel very proud of her achievement.”

Unit winner announced

The Jessop Wing Hospital’s neonatal unit in Sheffield has been voted ‘Neonatal unit of the year’ in the Mother and Baby Big Heart Awards 2010. Bliss Chief Executive Andy Cole presented the award to Caroline Nicholson, who was representing the unit, at a ceremony at the Park Lane Hilton hotel in London.

Nicky Emsley of Leeds nominated the unit. Her son Joshua was transferred there in July last year. Born at 26 weeks’ gestation weighing 2lbs, he needed the specialist care that the Jessop Wing provides. Nicky describes the care Joshua received as “world class”. She says: “Every member of staff was friendly and caring. They taught me how to care for Joshua, making it easy to bond with him. They explained everything clearly and were never too busy to



Nicky Emsley with Joshua and Caroline Nicholson from the unit.

answer my questions. No matter how upset I got, I’d always leave the unit reassured that Joshua was getting the best care possible.”

Two neonatal units were highly commended for the excellent work that they do. They are Leeds General Infirmary and the Winnicott Unit at St Mary’s Paddington.

Innovation in Care Fund 2010

Bliss is relaunching its Innovation in Care Fund. The fund is open for applications from individuals or teams working in perinatal care. Applications will be considered for any project that has the potential to make a contribution to Bliss’ mission; to improve survival rates and quality of life of babies born sick and premature.

Bliss specifically wants to fund small, cost-effective projects with the potential to achieve efficiencies in practice. This will enable the key findings of the Neonatal Taskforce to be implemented. The fund will prioritise the development and trial of small technological and practice interventions. Funding is available for projects up to and in the region of £30,000 a year and has a maximum duration of two years. Closing date for preliminary applications is **Friday, 30 July 2010.**

For more information, application forms and guidance notes visit www.bliss.org.uk or contact Zoë Chivers, zoec@bliss.org.uk, 0207 378 1122.

Boost for Breastfeeding Support in Sunderland

Support for Sunderland's nursing mothers received a boost recently as twelve new mums graduated from their breastfeeding peer counselling course.

The mums, who have successfully completed the Sunderland Children's Centres' Bosom Buddies training course, are now able to provide support and advice as qualified volunteers at the centres' breastfeeding support groups.

The 10-week course provides mums who have successfully nursed their own children with the opportunity to help encourage



Councillor Pat Smith has voiced her support for the Bosom Buddies training course.



other mothers to consider breastfeeding. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence says peer support is one of the most effective ways of helping new mums to succeed in breastfeeding.

The graduates received their accreditations from Marian Jones of La Leche League, the international organisation responsible for the peer counsellor training course. They also enjoyed a series of workshops where they shared their knowledge and expertise.

Councillor Pat Smith, Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City within Sunderland City Council, says: "The

Bosom Buddies Graduation was a wonderful way to mark the achievements of these mums who have seen the advantages that breastfeeding can bring to families and who wanted to help other mums and their babies enjoy similar positive experiences.

"Breastfeeding isn't always easy. With the right advice and a little perseverance it can be much more enjoyable, offering enormous benefits for mother and child."

The Bosom Buddies support groups run across the city's seventeen children's centres and are open to all expectant and new mums wanting to breastfeed.

Meningitis Trust welcomes new vaccine

Responding to news that a new 13-valent vaccine for pneumococcal disease has been accepted into the Childhood Immunisation Programme, Chief Executive of the Meningitis Trust Sue Davie says: "We are delighted with this announcement. Although there is already a vaccine available to protect against pneumococcal disease, this new vaccine will protect against six more strains. Pneumococcal meningitis is a devastating disease and vaccination is the only way to prevent it.

"Meningitis kills more children under five than any other infectious disease in the UK. Introducing this improved vaccine into the Childhood Immunisation Programme is a positive step forward in the fight against the disease.

"Although this vaccine will prevent many cases of meningitis, there are still other

strains of the disease for which there is no vaccine. We would urge people to remain vigilant for the signs and symptoms.

"It is particularly important for people to be aware of the similarities of the symptoms of meningitis to those of 'flu or swine 'flu, as misdiagnosis could be fatal.

During the winter months cases of bacterial meningitis increase, and with the current cold weather set to continue, it's more important than ever for people to be aware of the symptoms."

For more information visit:
www.meningitis-trust.org

Research to advise on the use of powdered baby formula

Studies carried out by scientists at Nottingham Trent University are helping to inform international guidelines and advice for feeding infants with powdered baby formula.

Their findings show that while existing guidelines state that water used for preparing the formula should be more than 70°C in temperature, differences in the volume of water used and time spent cooling can both prolong the survival of potentially harmful types of bacteria.

The research also identified that bacteria found in whey-based formulas, the main ingredient in 'first milks', had a higher heat tolerance than bacteria found in casein-based products or 'second milks'.

Professor Stephen Forsythe from Nottingham Trent University's School of Science and Technology says: "It is important to recognise that different practices can have an effect on bacteria being present. Our research has helped to better understand this and will inform guidelines aimed at avoiding dangerous incidents of infection."

Report on Scottish stillbirth and early baby deaths launched

Almost every day in Scotland a baby is stillborn and every other day a baby dies shortly after birth, according to a report by stillbirth and neonatal charity Sands.

A report to MSPs at the Scottish Parliament highlights several problem areas that Sands believes contribute to the deaths of almost 500 babies every year and calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that stillbirths and neonatal deaths are recognised as a major health issue and addressed with urgency.

According to the *Saving Babies Lives Report 2009*, Scotland has one of the highest perinatal mortality rates in Europe, with rates at their highest in city areas with the worst social deprivation and poorest general health indicators.

Problems contributing to baby deaths and lack of adequate care in Scotland today include: under resourced maternity and neonatal services; failure to accurately understand risk factors for stillbirth such as smoking, obesity and age-related risks; and a lack of research to

understand and prevent stillbirths.

The report calls for greater support for parents whose baby has died, offering time and a safe place to be with their baby for the short time they have together.

“It is of great concern that the reorganisation of maternity services in some parts of Scotland is leading to a loss of bereavement rooms and bereavement midwives. This trend must be reversed,” the report says.

Sands would like to see a national strategy, with specific emphasis on the following:

- Properly valuing every baby’s life.
- Developing a culture of continual risk assessment within maternity services to identify higher risk pregnancies.
- Recruiting and training more midwives and obstetric consultants.
- Better overall resourcing of maternity services to provide a continuous level of service and care.
- Comprehensive reviews of all deaths.
- More funding for research.

Neonatal pathway launched to encourage palliative care best practice

UK children’s palliative care charity ACT has launched a report on caring for terminally ill babies.

The report, funded by the Department of Health, has been launched to raise awareness of the needs of parents with babies for whom there is no hope of a cure.

It aims to encourage professionals who care for neonates, including paediatricians, obstetricians, nurses and midwives, to support parents to explore choices in their baby’s place

of care whenever possible, and to help families have the best possible experience and memory of their baby no matter how short their life may be.

According to the ACT, many of its members, including children’s hospices, are receiving more referrals from neonatal units, and more families are choosing to spend their last precious moments with their baby within the hospice.

The charity hopes the report will build on the growing collaboration and good practice among neonatal units, children’s hospices and community nursing teams who have already adapted their services and developed practice to support families with terminally ill babies.

Lizzie Chambers, ACT Chief Executive, says: “Anecdotal evidence from our members, families and professionals has shown that quality of life for families is greatly improved when babies can be transferred to either a hospice or the family home, or even the local hospital.

“We recognise the challenges that this approach presents in an environment geared towards sustaining life. We know that many of our members and neonatal teams are already providing excellent care and support to terminally ill babies and hope that our new pathway will build on this enabling more babies to receive palliative care, have a dignified and natural death – free of pain, but without unnecessary invasive treatment.”



Mandating NHS number for blood spot screening

From 1 April, the Newborn Blood Spot Screening Programme will introduce mandatory retesting of all babies whose blood spot cards do not carry the NHS number.

This is in response to a Safer Practice Notice issued by the National Patient Safety Agency, requiring the NHS number to be used as the unique national patient identifier, and making the process of tracking babies through the screening process much safer and more reliable.

For information on mandating the NHS number, visit the UK Newborn Screening Programme Centre website at <http://newbornbloodspot.screening.nhs.uk/cms.php?folder=2567>

Units encouraged to apply for Bounty Healthcare Fund

In celebration of the fact that it is fifty years since Bounty was founded, it has recently extended its Bounty Charitable Trust to include the new Bounty Healthcare Fund, available only to healthcare professionals, for projects which directly benefit maternity patients and young families.

The Bounty Healthcare Fund will be donating around £50,000 over the next year and to help as many projects as possible there is a maximum of £500 per ward. To make an application for your hospital or clinic, email: healthcarefund@bounty.com with your contact details, a brief description of the project, and the reason why you think this project should be supported.

Fifty neonatal nurses hired in Manchester

Greater Manchester's children's health services are celebrating the recruitment of 50 neonatal nurses thanks to 'Making it Better' investment, with 22-year-old Faye Bushell helping local units hit the half century.

The majority will work across three new and improved sites at Royal Oldham, St Mary's and Royal Bolton hospitals. Elsewhere new nurses will help to improve staffing levels, spreading the benefit of a £100 million investment in children's and maternity services.

Faye is excited about her future as part of neonatal services in the region. She says: "I came to Royal Oldham on a three-month placement while I was studying for my degree. The challenge and pleasure of working with babies and their parents made neonatal nursing what I really wanted to do once I'd graduated.



Faye Bushell joins 50 other new recruits.

"The way the team works together and the sense of anticipation around the Making it Better changes over the next two years makes it an exciting place to work with plenty of opportunity to develop new skills."

The new neonatal nurses will benefit from a sixth-month induction programme delivered locally, with emphasis on meeting higher standards, continuing best practice and reflecting on experience.

Leila Williams, Director of the Children, Young People and Families Network NHS Manchester, says: "Fifty new neonatal nurses is a great milestone and it's testament to the future we are investing in for children, parents and staff that such numbers of high calibre recruits are joining us."

Birth books and growth chart leaflets issued

The Department of Health has updated its popular 'Pregnancy and Birth to Five' books, with new advice on storing breast milk and the best medicines to take during pregnancy. They will be given free to all expectant mothers and new parents by their midwives and health visitors.

The DH has also launched a new growth charts leaflet for healthcare professionals giving succinct information on how to use and interpret the new growth charts launched in May 2009.

As well as information on plotting measurements and predicting adult height, the booklets' A5 format makes them more portable and easy to refer to, ensuring information is on hand when necessary.

The growth charts have been developed by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, based on the World Health Organisation's work, and replace current measures which are predominantly based on babies fed with formula milk. Research shows that breastfed babies tend to gain weight at a healthier pace and are less likely



to become obese in later life. The new charts will play an important role in establishing breastfeeding as the norm.

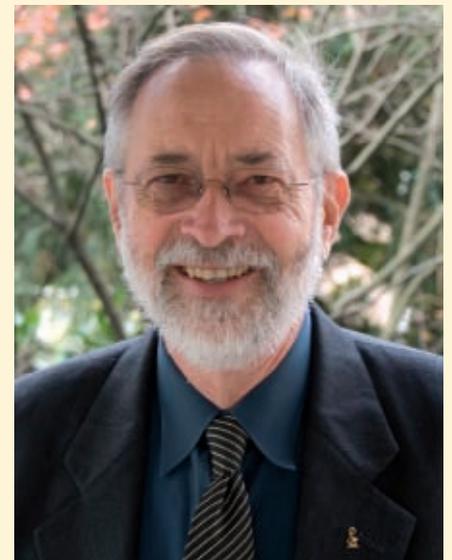
Rank prize awarded to human lactation scientist

One of the world's leading lactation experts, Professor Peter Hartmann, has been awarded the Rank Prize Fund for Nutrition, worth £50,000, in recognition of his groundbreaking collaborative work with Professor Robyn Owens and their invaluable contribution to the current understanding of human lactation.

The funds, which are awarded in acknowledgement of excellence in animal and health nutrition, crop husbandry and optoelectronics, were presented during an official ceremony in London on 8 February at The Royal College of Physicians.

Commenting on his award, Hartmann says: "I am delighted to have been presented with this prestigious prize and would like to thank Professor Owens for the collaborative partnership as well as the postgraduate students who have supported me and worked alongside me over the years.

"I am constantly excited by our investigations and am still working to develop our knowledge further. Human lactation is a vastly complex process and one which requires thorough



understanding to best support mother and baby."

Professor Hartmann has been dedicated to the field of human lactation since his daughter's birth in 1971. Prior to this he studied milk synthesis and hormonal control of milk production in animals. Hartmann and his research students have provided over 230 research articles and review papers.