

# Call the Midwife holdalls are just our bag, says NHS

By Yohannes Lowe

WHEN the BBC props department gave the characters in *Call the Midwife* matching leather holdalls, it was doubtful that any more thought was given to them beyond giving the uniforms a period look.

But they hit upon an idea that has now been picked up by the NHS.

There has never been a standard kit for helping women who give birth at home in all the NHS's 70 years, despite concerns that some midwives were not fully equipped to handle emergency situations.

But now six NHS trusts are trialling an identical bag each packed with the same items after research revealed that a third of midwives worried that they were ill prepared. This will put them in line with the midwives on the television drama, in which all of the child-birth assistants carry an identical bag of medical instruments.

The award-winning BBC show, which follows the lives of a group of midwives working in the poverty-stricken East End of London during the Fifties and Sixties, has been praised by health experts for its accuracy.

The charity Baby Lifeline called for the change after a survey discovered a wide variation in the instruments carried by community midwives, who deliver around 15,000 babies at home each year. It revealed that 30 per cent of front-line community midwives surveyed felt the bag they used was not safe, with some admitting they carried their equipment in clinical waste bags.

The survey also found that 35 per



The bags used on *Call the Midwife*

cent of respondents had to buy their home birth bags themselves, 27 per cent felt they did not carry all the equipment they needed and 40 per cent said their bag did not meet all their needs.

Some midwives even had to supply their own equipment and bags, while others had bags provided through their employer.

The new bags will be launched today with the help of two of the stars of *Call the Midwife* – Linda Bassett, who plays nurse Phyllis Crane, and Leonie Elliott, who plays nurse Lucille Anderson.

Judy Ledger, who founded Baby Lifeline, said: "Every midwife should have access to the equipment needed to deliver safe and effective care. This is what we are working to achieve through this project."



Linda Bassett, left, and Leonie Elliott, from the BBC's *Call the Midwife*, will help launch a new standardised home delivery bag for midwives, on behalf of the Baby Lifeline charity

# Anti-vaccine 'fake news' is risking lives, says health service boss

By Laura Donnelly HEALTH EDITOR

"FAKE news" by anti-vaccine campaigners on social media has fuelled a tripling in measles cases and is risking lives, the head of the NHS has said.

Simon Stevens said the promotion of misguided messages on Instagram and YouTube was one of the factors behind an alarming dip in vaccine coverage.

He said parents at his local school

were among those circulating advice which was against all evidence about the effectiveness of vaccines.

He told a health policy summit: "One thing we are very concerned about is vaccination in this country. Across the world two to three million lives are saved each year by vaccination."

Official figures show there were 913 cases of measles in England between January and October last year – com-

pared with 259 in the whole of the previous year.

Mr Stevens said that parents who failed to get their children vaccinated were as irresponsible as if they had failed to teach their children to look left and right before crossing the road.

He told the Nuffield Trust health policy summit: "As part of the 'fake news' movement the vaccine deniers are getting some traction. Last year we saw

triple the number of measles cases that we had seen the year before.

"We are not being helped by the fact that although nine in ten parents say they support vaccination, half of them say that they have seen fake messages around vaccination on social media."

Mr Stevens read out a message he had received from a parent at his own child's school: "Even at my own daughter's primary school ... the Whatsapp

messages from the parents say: 'My kids aren't vulnerable and I think loading on vaccines blocks their systems from fighting disease as it should do', so we have got a responsibility to really explain that it's not only in the interests of your own children, but herd immunity for other children as well."

He warned that uptake of the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine is now at 87.5 per cent compared with

the 95 per cent target set by the World Health Organisation.

The chief executive of NHS England told *The Daily Telegraph*: "Any mum or dad understandably will be concerned at posts on social media peddled by people who mislead families through fake science and scare stories, but parents can be reassured that not only are vaccines safe, they are vital to our children's wellbeing."