

The Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP to open inaugural Maternity Safety Conference in Birmingham

On 22nd January 2020, West Midlands based charity Baby Lifeline is hosting a major national conference focusing on delivering safer maternity care for mothers and babies – Working together towards safer maternity care.

The event will be opened by the Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP - the longest serving Health Secretary in British political history. Mr Hunt made improving patient safety a national health priority during his tenure and since leaving government he has continued to passionately champion the issue.

Baby Lifeline's inaugural Maternity Safety Conference is taking place at the Hilton Metropole in Birmingham, with many of the country's leading maternity experts alongside parents and families who have suffered birth traumas set to attend.

The day's speakers comprise senior representatives from the UK's leading organisations in maternity patient safety, including: President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists; CEO of the Royal College of Midwives; National Clinical Director of Maternity at NHS England; Director of Safety and Learning at NHS Resolution; Head of Maternity and Neonatal Transformation Programmes at NHS Improvement; and England's first Chief Midwifery Officer.

In 2017, Mr Hunt announced the government's ambition to reduce the rate of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths in England by 50% by 2025.

Though progress has been made, maternity experts agree that more work is required to meet this target. Events such as the Maternity Safety Conference are crucial in enabling the level of collaboration required to achieve this ambition.

Former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt says **"As Health Secretary I met families affected by problems with maternity care at Morecambe Bay and elsewhere and made improving maternity services a national priority. I hope this conference keeps up the momentum towards our shared goal of halving rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths, and brain injuries occurring during or soon after birth by 2025."**

Dr Bill Kirkup CBE - President of Baby Lifeline, Former Associate Chief Medical Officer in the Department of Health and Regional Director of Public Health, has chaired major enquiries including the Morecambe Bay investigation He will chair a main session at the conference and says **"Learning from experience is vital, not just in avoiding future tragedies but also in continuing to improve services everywhere."**

From a parent's perspective, Baby Lifeline's Ambassador and patient safety campaigner James Titcombe OBE states **"Having been personally affected by serious problems in maternity care, it's heartening that there is now so much national work ongoing to improve maternity safety. However, the evidence tells us that there is still a long way to go. This conference is the first of its kind, bringing together national**

organisations, policy leaders, subject experts, front line staff and parents/families to share insights and learning.”

For many years, the UK has had significantly higher stillbirth rates than many other European countries. The human cost is immeasurable, and research frequently finds that most of these tragedies are avoidable with different care.

There is also an overwhelming financial impact associated with tragedies in maternity care. Last year, the value of obstetric litigation claims received by NHS Resolution totalled over £2 billion. This is roughly 50% of the total value of claims received, despite being only 10% of the number of claims.

Hundreds of delegates from all corners of the UK, and around the world, will be in attendance on the day to engage in discussions centring on ‘Working Together Towards Safer Maternity Care’.

For press passes please call – Judy Ledger 01676 534671/07932102403

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Background on Baby Lifeline

Baby Lifeline is a national charity based in the heart of the Midlands which supports the care of pregnant women and babies across the UK and worldwide.

Founded 39 years ago by nurse Judy Ledger, following the personal tragedy of losing three premature babies, the charity has focussed on supporting care of pregnancy and birth to ensure the healthiest outcomes possible. Her experience was incredibly traumatic, and thanks later to dedicated and expert care, she went on to have 3 healthy children. She has been at the helm of Baby Lifeline, and, together with leading NHS experts, has raised millions of pounds for the provision of specialist equipment for maternity and neonatal units, produced major research projects in response to evidence based reports, and provided the recommended expert, continuing professional development training, for over 25,000 maternity healthcare professionals, (with 10,000 of these receiving training in the last couple of years). Predominantly training UK professionals, the charity has ventured to other parts of the world including Kuwait, when shortly after the last Gulf war, Baby Lifeline worked with army humanitarian units and the British Embassy to train 220 Iraqi and Kuwaiti health professionals.

Baby Lifeline is a truly unique organisation that works to support our wonderful NHS professionals in preventing avoidable tragedies in pregnancy and childbirth. The way that it operates is highly collaborative and unique; with a panel of world-renowned multi-professional experts informing its decisions, and its training delivered by frontline NHS professionals. Baby Lifeline works closely with a wide range of national and international organisations, recognising that it can only truly achieve the goals if everyone is pulling in the same direction.

There have been some tremendous advancements in maternity care in recent times, but it is widely recognised that more needs to be done – particularly if the government’s ambition to halve stillbirth, neonatal and maternal deaths by 2025 is to be achieved.