

PRESS RESPONSE

[‘Largest maternity scandal in NHS history’: Dozens of mothers and babies died on wards of hospital trust, leaked report reveals](#)

“It’s devastating to hear of the dozens of avoidable tragedies that took place at the trust over the last 40 years, and the consequential heartbreak for those involved. The families have been forced to experience situations that should never be allowed to happen within the NHS.

Much more often than not, maternity care in the UK is entirely safe, though avoidable tragedies are not isolated to this trust. Investigations into baby deaths and severe brain injuries in the UK have found that 71-79% could have been avoided with different care.

There is no single solution to improving safety for mothers and babies. It requires a collaborative, transparent approach and, crucially, investment in staff, training, and infrastructure. Baby Lifeline found that maternity training provision in key areas relating to these deaths and injuries is not prioritised, standardised, or assessed widely. Professionals must be supported to access high-quality training, which will help save lives and avoid these tragedies.

£8.1 million was released for maternity safety training by Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt in 2016, this is a small amount when compared to just one cerebral palsy claim. In October 2018, the High Court approved a settlement across 11 cases in just 24 hours that totalled £100 million to cover the care of children left disabled at birth.

Baby Lifeline alone trained over 6000 health professionals in 12 months with a fraction of the total amount released. The evaluation of the training feedback demonstrated trends to alter practice in individual professionals and organisations in key areas shown to be related to mortality and morbidity in maternity care. This fund has never been repeated despite calls from us and the frontline health professionals we work with to do so. Evidence has shown that relevant training can indeed reduce the number of serious incidents.

We ask that regular funding is prioritised for maternity professionals to adequately provide and attend high-quality training in areas shown to reduce mortality and morbidity. The funding must allow back-filling of staff to attend training (both in-house and external), travel and accommodation costs to attend national conferences, and improving local resource (i.e. training equipment).”

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