

Bliss Baby Charter Conference 2019: a review

Research shows that parents being involved in their baby's care (family-centred care) on the neonatal unit can have positive effects on the entire family. However, as a nurse or consultant, or a parent on the unit, how do you make sure family involvement is prioritised on the neonatal unit? How can change be supported on the unit when staffing levels are low and doing what is familiar makes life easier?

Health professionals across the country came together to discuss these topics on 26 September at the Bliss Baby Charter Conference in Leicester.

Speakers from across the UK discussed the impact of supporting change in units to achieve the best outcomes for babies.

'It was a really enjoyable, informative day. The conference inspired me to carry on with the work we are doing' - Conference delegate

The day kick started with Project and Change Manager, Andy Stevens talking about the impact of change in any situation. Andy noted that "Change is the only constant" in life and something which affects all of us. Andy went through the change curve and gave tips, which included communicating with others, obtaining senior buy-in, learning from others, and supporting the change ourselves.

Parent speaker Mel Ibrahim shared with the audience her harrowing journey on the neonatal unit, which started with her giving birth in the hospital bathroom at 24 weeks gestation. Mel openly talked about how the experience impacted her mental health, thanks in part to the lack of professional psychological support available to her at the time. Since leaving neonatal care, Mel has campaigned extensively and secured a dedicated psychologist for the neonatal unit at Queen's Medical Centre. Mary Palframan, Family Support Sister at the neonatal unit spoke about the positive affect this new support was having on parents and families. Over the past few months, she has found that recovery of mothers and bonding with babies improved with clinical psychologist in place.

Delegates also heard from Sarah Roberts, Acting Senior Sister and Developmental Care Lead, Queen's Hospital Burton, who discussed cue based feeding and the positive response which has been received from parents.

Neil Patel, Consultant Neonatologist and Ros Montgomerie, Senior Charge Nurse at The Royal Hospital for Children, Glasgow spoke about collaborating with parents who would have been impacted by the change of being on a neonatal unit. Their ethos has been to support parents in as many ways as possible. This has included the use of whiteboards by cot side, using vcreate (a video messaging service that helps to minimise separation anxiety in parents of children in neonatal and paediatric units), using finger print scanners for access to the unit and the setup of the 'Helping Us Grow' (HUG) group, which is a partnership of staff and parents.

Michele Upton, Head of Maternity and Neonatal Transformation Programmes, NHS Improvement discussed the Atain project (Avoiding Term Admissions in Neonatal Units). Michele highlighted the importance of working with people who are enthusiastic individuals and linking in with national guidelines. She also highlighted the importance of working with front line teams such as local maternity services and ODN's.

Award-winning author, Francesca Segal spoke to delegates about her neonatal experience. Francesca read an excerpt from her book, *Mother Ship* and spoke at length about her experience on the neonatal units where her twins received care. Francesca's touching and compelling story was an excellent way to close the conference. Everyone who attended the conference received a free copy of *Mother Ship* thanks to Francesca and her publishers, Penguin.

Bliss' Neonatal Excellence Awards

Following the conference, we held our second Neonatal Excellence Awards, celebrating outstanding individuals, teams and projects that make a difference to babies born premature or sick through delivering high quality family-centred care as part of the Bliss Baby Charter.

Bliss received over 350 nominations for the awards. Parents, families and healthcare professionals sent in submissions from across the UK wanting to show their appreciation for the support, dedication and excellence they have seen in neonatal care. Their stories were heart-warming, moving and inspirational.

The winners included:

- **WaterWipes Team of the Year Award** - Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital received the award for promoting and encouraging family-centred care. The team in Exeter have been working with parents, allied health professionals and nursing and medical teams to enable the team to provide a service which suits the needs of families on the unit. Families are welcome to stay next to their baby at all times of the day, by the availability of camp beds for every cot space, as well as single bed rooms and options for rooming in, with the intention of keeping families together.
- **Parents' Choice Award** - Joyce Presland from The Lister Hospital was given the accolade for going above and beyond supporting parents and families through family-centred care. Joyce was nominated by Jane Stott whose baby, Madeleine, was born eight weeks premature weighing only 2lb 11oz. In her nomination Jane described Joyce as: "A model professional, caring and kind with a sense of humour and always has her patients' best interests at heart."
- **Project of the Year Award** - Glangwili General Hospital received the award for offering a multi-disciplinary appointment with the neonatal dietitian, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and speech and language therapist supported by the neonatal outreach nurse. This helps families based in rural areas attend hospital appointments more easily. The team also travel together to see the family in the home if they are unable to attend appointments at the hospital.
- **Pregnacare Lifetime Achievement Award** - Professor Neil Marlow received the award for his career-long focus to understand the main challenges and neuropsychological outcomes of extremely preterm infants.