



Fetal Cardiology and Neonatal Intensive Care at Evelina London

A special report prepared for The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation

The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation has made two vital new projects possible at Evelina London.

The first is the establishment of new, state-of-the-art bespoke equipment for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) enabling us to provide care for seriously unwell newborn babies. This new equipment is an integral part of the ambitious expansion of the NICU that has been underway over the last two years. Thanks to your support, the expansion has been successfully completed and we are now able to provide specialist care for many more babies born with life-threatening complications.

The second project is the construction of new family counselling rooms in the Fetal Cardiology department. The building work for these new rooms is currently underway and, when complete, will provide us with a suitable space in which we can inform parents of their child's condition, help them to come to terms with this news and begin providing them with the different options so they can choose the next step that they would prefer to take. The environment in which these conversations happens must be carefully planned, and the new rooms that you have funded will provide exactly what we need to make the process as smooth as possible.

Thank you for making the care and support that we can provide for severely unwell children and their parents at Evelina London even better.



Evelina London provides specialist care for children with complex health issues

Update on the new Fetal Cardiology family counselling rooms

John Simpson, Professor of Paediatric and Fetal Cardiology



Thanks to your kind donation, construction is currently underway on our new family counselling rooms in the Fetal Cardiology department at Evelina London. We are aiming to begin using these rooms with parents in November 2017.

Family counselling rooms are the environment in which parents are given potentially life-changing news about the health of their baby. The scans we provide in Fetal Cardiology yield instant results, so if we find something wrong we need the facilities in which to discuss this with parents in the most sensitive way possible.

Fetal Cardiology at Evelina London provides scans for around 2,000 patients each year, of which over 300 identify problems. The parents whose scans identify a problem will be taken to the counselling rooms where we will explain the issue to them, and then start to lay out their options. These options usually consist of different complex surgical interventions, and in some cases we may also offer termination of the pregnancy. We always have a nurse specialist on hand to provide counselling and support during this very difficult time.

Some parents arrive at the test looking for reassurance that their baby is fine, and have not prepared themselves for the possibility of there being a problem. Others are very nervous when they arrive, as they have been told to come for the scan because there is a potential problem with their baby's heart, so they are very stressed and anxious. Some have already had a previous baby die of a heart condition and are bracing themselves for the worst for a second time. Each of these different states of mind will have their own effect on a

person's ability to deal with bad news, so the more at ease and relaxed we can make them before and during the discussion, the better.

Parents of children I have treated successfully in the past tell me that they will always remember the room they were in when they found out about their baby's heart problems. It is therefore crucial that we take time to think about the atmosphere in these rooms – we need to make sure the parents are at ease, and are comfortable, so that they can process what we are telling them.

'The new counselling rooms, made possible by your generosity, will enable us to provide a better, more humane service for our patients.'

The design for the new rooms has therefore involved a consultation with staff across all different departments at the hospital, especially counselling specialists. We have based colour schemes, furniture and room layout on this feedback in order to create a space which will provide a calming and pleasant atmosphere. We are also currently looking into acquiring artwork for the walls of the rooms.

We have also considered the complexities of parents' journeys through this process and positioned the rooms so that it is possible for parents to leave the hospital without having to return to the reception area and walk past the other parents who are waiting for their tests.

The new counselling rooms, made possible by your generosity, will enable us to provide a better, more humane service for our patients. I am very much looking forward to the rooms opening later in the year. Thank you for your kind support.