

New unit is detecting heart defects in babies earlier in pregnancy



Evelina London's new fetal cardiology unit recently opened after undergoing major improvements and is now located closer to maternity services in St Thomas' Hospital. It features new counselling rooms, one of which was funded by The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation. A review room allows doctors to observe scans, and diagnose any problems there and then, cutting down on review and waiting times.

The ultrasound rooms contain additional monitors so that expectant parents can watch their scans in greater comfort. A live video link to the Harris Birthright Centre at King's College Hospital means doctors at both sites can share scans and pool their expertise.

John Simpson, professor of paediatric and fetal cardiology at Evelina London, said: "Confirmation that nothing is wrong is hugely reassuring for parents with a high-risk pregnancy and the new ultrasound scanning technology is a game changer for babies diagnosed with heart defects. Earlier diagnosis gives us much more time to plan care, to prepare parents for what is ahead and provide them with specialist support."

A research study, led by **Dr Vita Zidere**, consultant fetal and paediatric cardiologist at Evelina London, is currently assessing how well the SMI technique diagnoses fetal heart conditions compared with conventional ultrasound scanning methods.