

Alder Hey Children's Hospital - Evie's story



We have a longstanding relationship with Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool and approached them in November 2018 to explore how we might help again. One key area of need is 'Thermocare' heated cots which help

provide the essential care for neonatal babies. These cots are expensive but the need for them and the benefits that flow meant we had no hesitation in helping. We made a grant of £7,096.

We asked Alan French from Alder Hey to tell us about the cots and how they help in the care of unwell newly born babies. A great way of telling us how important the cots are is wonderfully illustrated by the story Alan tells of a special baby named Evie.

Here's what Alan had to say.

"Let me start by explaining what this is all about.

What does neonatal mean? It describes babies during their first 28 days of life - a time when every moment is precious in terms of nurturing both their immediate capacity to thrive and their future health and wellbeing.

For neonatal babies the optimal temperature range is extremely delicate and it is vital that they are cared for within a consistent environment. When the babies are admitted to Alder Hey because they are unwell or require surgery, they have an increased susceptibility to body temperature instability.



When treating premature babies, these risks become even more acute.

How do the cots help? 'Thermocare' heated cots have been specifically designed to meet the needs of these babies. Performing a similar function to an incubator used in the care of premature babies, each cot is lined with a soft, warm gel pad which helps create a controlled temperature environment. Also, as the tops and sides of each cot can be easily removed, they allow clinical staff to have full and unrestricted access to the babies in a way that causes minimal disruption.

To give you some idea of the scale of this need during 2017/18 a total of 1,143 neonatal babies were admitted to Alder Hey. It has been estimated that each 'Thermocare' heated cot will benefit approximately 30 neonatal babies each year. Cots will be used extensively across Alder Hey, including accident and emergency, critical care and neonatal surgery wards. Some wards may need a cot for just a few hours, for example for a baby requiring overnight observation following an emergency admission. Others may need them for many weeks, for example, to support the care of a premature baby who has undergone major surgery.

As well as supporting the treatment programmes of neonatal babies at Alder Hey, the design of the 'Thermocare' heated cots will also have an important impact on how family members experience their loved one's treatment and progress. In particular, they will allow parents to maintain an important degree of physical closeness to their baby, helping to nurture early bonds.

Now let me tell you about one of our babies who has benefited from this care.

Evie was born in January 2018 with a life-threatening birth defect called a diaphragmatic hernia. This occurs when the diaphragm, which separates the chest and abdominal cavities, does not form completely in the womb leaving a hole. As a result, the contents of the abdomen (e.g. stomach, intestine, liver, spleen, etc.) can move up into the chest which can seriously affect the growth and development of the lungs prior to birth. Because of this condition, when Evie was just a few days old, she had to have a major operation at Alder Hey.



Joanne and Jason, Evie's mum and dad, found out that Evie had the condition at Joanne's 20 week scan. Not even born yet, she was given just a 50/50 chance of survival. Following her surgery, Evie faced a long recovery and heated cots were essential in helping to support her treatment.

Joanne told us: "The care here has been amazing. We feel safe knowing that not only is Evie in the best hands but also that the facilities here are second to none and we're so grateful for the donations for the cots, which have helped our baby girl."



All of us involved at Alder Hey are pleased to report that Evie's surgery was a complete success. Look at this photograph taken in December 2018. She is thriving and enjoying life at home with her family."

I hope Alan's blog explains what these specialised cots are about. Put simply, they are important because they save lives by treating very unwell neonatal babies. That sounds like something that should be supported, what do you think?

Evie's story tells us not only what wonderful work Alder Hey Children's Hospital does but how we can help by coming up with the funds to buy 'Thermocare' heated cots and other essential equipment. You will understand why it didn't take long for us to give Alder Hey a grant. If you want to know how you can help contact Alan by email alan.french@alderheycharity.org.