

Obstetric Negligence Claims Take Centre Stage in New NHS Report

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The Safer Maternity Care plan and RRR scheme proposed by the NHS aim to tackle the high costs incurred by these type of negligence cases.

(Newswire.net -- September 19, 2017) --The [new NHS Annual Report](#) has been released, which highlights the trends in numbers of negligence claims, as well as the total costs resulting from such

claims. While overall numbers of negligence claims are going down by 2%, the total costs to the NHS have increased by 14%.

The NHS has put together a [Safer Maternity Care plan](#), with the aim of reducing the number of obstetric negligence claims, which are the cases with the highest costs. When a baby is left with a life-altering injury, it requires treatment for the rest of their life. This cost then falls upon the NHS, which in some cases can be required to pay out up to \$5 million per baby.

The plan presents [several different measures](#) that will support trusts to improve maternity safety. The focus of the plan is to improve education for staff members and leaders, increase transparency in reporting and investigations, and allow better communication to occur between staff members.

First, a £250,000 maternity safety innovation fund is being set up, with the aim that it will come up with and pilot new ideas for improving maternity care. The aim of this fund is to mirror an already-successful scheme called the PROMPT scheme, which has already produced a “a 50% reduction in babies born with a low oxygen and a 70% reduction in babies born with a paralysed arm”.

The plan also proposes that new maternity ratings should be published, so that there is greater transparency with regard to care quality. This will also raise standards as each clinical commissioning group tries to raise its rating. Furthermore, families will have clearer and more comprehensive information when assessing the quality of their local maternity service.

Finally, the plan suggests establishing a new Maternal and Neonatal Health Quality Improvement Programme. The purpose of this is to create ease of information flow, so that best practice ideas can be exchanged. A scheme in Scotland which took a similar approach found that a 19% decrease in stillbirths resulted over 3 years.

The other primary suggestion from the NHS has been to set up a rapid resolution and redress (RRR) scheme. This scheme proposes that it would provide financial support to eligible families who have suffered an incident of medical negligence, without the family needing to go through a formal legal process. The RRR scheme would provide an “alternative system of compensation”, and families would avoid needing to bring a claim through the courts. There are some critics of this proposed RRR scheme, however, as legal proceedings can provide a different and better outcome in some cases.

The Necessity of Legal Proceedings

The issue that arises with the proposed RRR scheme, is that approaching medical negligence should not be a budget-balancing exercise. The costs to the NHS need to be put into perspective when considering the actual cost to the individual and the family who are suffering from the incident of medical negligence. In some cases, individuals deal with a life-long disability or a reduced life expectancy.

A solicitor from a [medical negligence specialist firm](#), notes that “these types of cases must be properly investigated,

due to the large burden of care that falls upon the family of a severely disabled child. Without this thorough investigation, negligence can be missed, and the family ends up facing a huge cost without the financial means to support their child.”

When [proving medical negligence has occurred](#) , the burden of proof is extremely high, and it is a complex process to show what happened, “often involving a number of experts to determine whether negligence took place, and whether it caused brain damage.”

The new RRR scheme could face these types of issues in determining the facts; without a legal process and evidence discovery, will the NHS simply accept that negligence has occurred?

Source: <http://newswire.net/newsroom/news/00097922-obstetric-negligence-claims-take-centre-stage-in-new-nhs-report.html>