

Supporting babies at St George's



Newsreader Sophie Raworth launches new neonatal post



First Touch patron Sophie Raworth was guest of honour at the official launch of the Family Centred Care Coordinator post. The post, jointly funded by First Touch and Bliss, will last for three years. Postholders Bobbie Everson and Lyndsey Hookway will provide information and support to parents in order to better prepare them for the unique and emotionally challenging experience of having a baby on the neonatal unit.

Sophie paid tribute to the work of the neonatal staff, and wished Bobbie and Lyndsey all the best with their new role.

The neonatal unit on ITV's Daybreak

On December 23rd Daybreak's presenter Dr Hilary Jones broadcast live from the neonatal unit, interviewing staff and parents. Consultant Justin Richards made sure that First Touch got a big mention as the neonatal unit's charity, and explained how much medical equipment we fund — along with little extras like the Christmas stockings that hang from the incubators and cots on Christmas morning, full of presents for the babies.

This was a fabulous morning when the hard work of the incredible medical staff was recognised on national television — go St George's!



NNU staff Doris, Theresa and Justin pictured with ITV's Dr Hilary Jones

In this issue:

Zach and Audrey's families hold a ball

Rochelle Milligan runs the London Marathon

Baby Gabriel's story

Fantastic fundraisers:

Bahi and the BMAKA raised £2725 working up a sweat doing a 35-round "Sparathon". The money was used to buy Tom Thumb attachments.

Robert Croucher and the Bourne Cricket Club raised thousands of pounds in their 'Grim Challenge'. The money was put towards a ventilator for the neonatal unit.

Fide Sale swam 5000 metres for us, and raised over £2,000 for intensive care equipment

With thanks to everyone who has raised funds for us. We are hugely grateful.

Donate to First Touch today, visit www.first-touch.org.uk

First Touch news

The incredible Hall and Ingle families

The families of Zachary Hall and Audrey Ingle have been undertaking various fundraising ventures for us. The highlight of their efforts was a black tie ball just before Christmas. The families have raised an incredible £24,000 for First Touch, which was used to purchase a ventilator for the neonatal unit's intensive care nurseries.



Zach's dad Dave called us the morning after the ball, euphoric (and slightly worse for wear after a very late night!) to tell us that the ball and auction had raised more money than he had possibly dreamed of. We couldn't believe the news either! We are immensely grateful to the Halls and Ingles, and to their friends and families who attended the ball.

Zachary and Audrey both had surgery at the neonatal unit in late 2010. We are delighted to tell you that both babies are now doing brilliantly. We had the pleasure of meeting them both at the neonatal unit when their families came in to present the cheque to us.

London 2012 Olympics – Gold Challenge

2012 is the year of the London Olympics. If you would like the chance to participate in Olympic and Paralympic sports whilst raising sponsorship for First Touch, please sign up with The Gold Challenge.

You can even take part in the 2012 km Challenge from the comfort of your own gym, whilst you cycle, swim, row or walk on the gym equipment.

Full details are at www.goldchallenge.org

Update from First Touch's Sarah & Sonja



Between April 2011 and March 2012 we were able to spend £174,000 on vital medical equipment for the neonatal unit. This includes three ventilators, two incubators, a transport incubator, two twin cots, four Tom Thumb resuscitators, three phototherapy lamps, two vapothersms and six breast pumps. Thanks to each and every one of you for your tireless fundraising and dedication.

We are currently raising funds for a fourth Stephanie ventilator which costs £25,000, and a breast milk pasteuriser costing £15,000. You can find full details of the equipment needs on our website www.first-touch.org.uk under Current Campaigns.

If you can help with any of our campaigns please get in touch.

All the best, Sarah Collins and Sonja Timpson



Sign up with the Gold Challenge for First Touch and take part in a number of Olympic and Paralympic sports

Fundraising news

Fundraising news

Supporter Rochelle Milligan is taking on the 2012 London Marathon for First Touch. Rochelle's son James was born 12 week's prematurely in March 2005. Rochelle told us, 'James spent the first 83 days of his life at the neonatal unit at St George's. Without their specialist equipment, facilities and care he would not have survived.'

By the time the marathon comes around he will be seven years old, but in those days we didn't know he would make it to seven days let alone seven years. Happily James has grown into a happy and loving young boy, and we will be forever grateful to the staff at the neonatal unit for all they did to get him through those difficult first 12 weeks.'

We are very grateful to Rochelle, as well as our two other wonderful London Marathon runners, Dee Griffin and James White.



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Babies on film



We have produced a film about the work of the neonatal unit, featuring a number of our precious babies. You can watch it on Youtube, and we have produced a number of DVDs which we are happy to send out to help you with your fundraising for us.

Particular thanks to Nick Harvey, Julian Butler and Ali Harvey, without whom we could not have made this wonderful short film.

Funding Projects

We are raising funds for a fourth ventilator (£25,000) and breast milk pasteuriser (£15,000) and for the Family Centred Care Coordinator post (£50,000 over two years) Please get in touch if you can help.

We put some burning questions to our celebrity patron, Ortis Deley!

Why did you first get involved with First Touch?

I first got involved with First Touch a few years back after being told about my friend Catherine's daughter, Evie, who had been born early at St George's. I'd only just seen the premature arrival of my cousin's twin girls, too.

You took part in BBC's Celebrity Mastermind for First Touch. How nervous were you?

Very! I'd put pressure on myself to do well as I knew you guys and my friends and family would be watching. I was very nervous, but loved my time on the show.

We hear you play in a band?

I do. I front Revenge of Gentlemen, a covers band which is basically an excuse for a bunch of past-it musicians to play their favourite songs for charity. We had a gig in April at The CAMP Basement in the City.

What has the rest of 2012 got in store for you?

Who knows?! I've left the Gadget Show and I'm very excited at what the year may bring. I have just danced on BBC1 for Sport Relief and I've fingers in a few more pies.

Thanks for all your support, Ortis!



Your stories

Bonnie and Gabriel Ash



My son Gabriel was born at our local hospital in Epsom. It soon became clear that he was a seriously ill little boy fighting sepsis and double pneumonia thanks to suspected GBS. At 12 hours old he was fully sedated on the oscillating ventilator. It was a very worrying time.

We were transferred to St George's neonatal unit when Gabriel was 22 hours old. At 8 pounds and 10 ounces, Gabriel was easily the biggest baby in the unit, but he needed all his strength to help him through.

For the first two days we needed to limit how much we touched him because it tired him out. He had several scans, x-rays and brain scans every day to ensure he was monitored fully. He had a line into his umbilical for arterial bloods to be taken and several other intravenous drips for medications and glucose. He needed the very latest ventilator because his lungs were struggling a great deal. He was too poorly to be tube fed at all until day four when he got some of my Colostrum. Filling up his tummy with anything would have restricted his poorly lungs. Because of all the equipment we couldn't see what he looked like which made naming him very hard!

At two days old I got my very first cuddle with my little boy. It was very daunting to hold him because he was so fragile and there was a mass of tubes and wires that I didn't want to tug. The nurses helped me a great deal and I was so very pleased to get this contact. Soon after this I was able to start his "care". I never thought I would ever be so keen to change a dirty nappy! Gabriel was my third baby, but the experience of NICU was totally new to me.

The staff were amazing. They kept me informed with all that was going on, and told me the whole story, even though it was always tempered with warnings that these babies take two steps forward and one back. I forever felt that I was waiting for a relapse and have never been so stressed or distressed in my life.

On day four his lungs were stronger. He was taken off the ventilator and put on SiPAP (a less invasive form of therapy to help babies breathe) for short spells. Finally we could see him and we decided to call him Gabriel, meaning "hero of God" because it really felt like a miracle he was winning his fight.

When Gabriel was five days old he made the move out of Intensive Care into Special Care. This was a big step forward, but oddly the thing that marked it the most for us was that he was finally dressed (he needed less lines and monitors) so he looked like a real baby. I also got to give him his first proper breastfeed this day.

At six days Gabriel was well enough to return to the SCBU at Epsom. He was transferred by transport incubator with me in a car right behind him. Because I had had my 3rd C section I was still needing care, not least because I had spent every day since his birth stood over his cot and not recovering from the op.

When we got back to Epsom he went to the SCBU and I was put in a room on my own to limit the risk of cross infection from the other ladies and babies. At Epsom he needed to continue more intravenous antibiotics and monitoring, and the SiPAP stayed for a day or so more. When he was one week old he was finally well enough to come up from SCBU and join me in my room, and I wheeled him back down twice a day for his antibiotics. It was very scary having him with me and off of all the monitors I had got so used to reading and understanding.

Gabriel and I finally came home when he was 11 days old — but it felt like we'd waited a month for that day!

Gabriel turns four this September, and we have since added a beautiful sister to our family too. Gabriel is as bright as a button and you would never guess at the awful start he had.



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