



INCUBATOR APPEAL INTERVIEW

An interview with Louisa Cantwell, Developmental Care Lead and Ward Sister for Buscot Ward, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading.

Please introduce yourself

I am Louisa. I am the Developmental Care Lead for Buscot Ward and a Ward Sister. My job is all about protecting little babies' brains, reducing their pain and stress, supporting their positioning and growth and engaging their parents. I'm interested in anything that we can do to help that process. Family Care is extremely important in developmental outcomes.

Why a Giraffe Omnibed?

A Giraffe Omnibed is an incubator whose lid can be raised, giving access to the baby for procedures, whilst still maintaining warmth. We can weigh babies in the incubator, the mattress can be turned and it has an adjustable spotlight.

Research shows that some preterm babies, especially when they start school, are displaying problems with all sorts of brain functions such as performing maths, planning and organisation as well as problems with working memory. This has been found to do with the impact of stress and pain on the preterm brain. Preterm babies cannot differentiate between stress and pain and their response to both is to release cortisol. An excess or overload of this cortisol can cause damage to those parts of the brain responsible for these brain functions. Therefore, anything we can do to help reduce stress and pain to a premature baby can help prevent this damage and improve that baby's outcome.

Moving

Moving a baby from one piece of equipment to another not only risks infection but also stress to their brains from that movement. These babies are used to being inside their mums and the gentle protection of the amniotic fluid. Any movement of a preterm baby where they are lifted up and out, especially if you are talking about a tiny baby such as a 26 or 27 weeker, will cause them a large amount of stress. Also, if they are going to be in an uncomfortable environment, such as under bright lights or in the cold on weighing scales, then they are going to be stressed and in pain; and this stress has been shown to cause damage to premature babies' brains.

We believe skin to skin (Kangaroo Care) with parents is one of the most important things for a baby to have with its' parents and evidence supports this. With the exception of being taken out of the incubator for kangaroo care, it is clear that the less a baby has to be moved the better its developmental outcome is likely to be. With current research showing that overloading a preterm baby with too many stressful procedures at one time causing potential brain damage, but these procedures being necessary for the baby's health and well-being, then we have a difficult dilemma. The best solution would be an incubator in which the baby can be moved as little as possible for those necessary procedures. This is the Giraffe Omnibed!

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What other benefits spring to mind?

The Omnibed is fantastic because we can weigh the baby in the incubator. The lid comes up (without the bed losing warmth) and the mattress can be moved around so we can perform procedures without having to physically move the baby. It comes with a spotlight which we can angle whilst doing checks and procedures and thus avoids the stimulus of a bright light-even during routine necessary medical checks and nappy changes.

We need to protect babies' sleep. Premature babies cannot sleep for any great amount of time. If we can do anything to make it more comfortable for them or a nicer environment then we should. Obviously when they are sleeping and comfortable they are able to grow because they are using less energy on other things. Having a comfortable environment means they are less stressed, can sleep, and can grow better as they can also tolerate their feeds better.



In short, we need to reduce a preterm baby's stress and pain as much as possible.

Procedures are necessary; stressors such as cold, noise, light and movement are not. Having the baby in an Omnibed means we can perform procedures without taking them out of their little nests. They are therefore not exposed to so much light, noise, cold and movement on top of the procedure itself. The brain is therefore subjected to far less stress, the potential for damage to the brain can be reduced dramatically and their long and short term developmental outcomes positively boosted.



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ABOUT BIBS

BIBS (Babies in Buscot Support) is a registered charity that supports babies and their families in the special care baby unit (Buscot Ward) at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. The committee and the supporters are all parents/carers of ex-Buscot babies who have been through the experience of having a premature or full term but ill baby.

How will this help local babies and the community?

Having Giraffe Omnibeds would make us far better able to protect these preterm babies that are very vulnerable to the things which we have discussed. If we can keep them in a nice, safe, comfortable and protected environment then their long term



developmental outcomes – for both physical and mental health – are much improved. This in turn can reduce the need for other services to be involved. It also means an easier journey for the parents, and makes it easier for them to be involved in all aspects of their baby's care whilst on the ward.



Our target

Babies in Buscot Support (BIBS) are raising funds to supply a much needed Giraffe Omnibed incubator to Buscot ward, the special care baby unit at the Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH) in Reading.

The first few hours, days and weeks of a premature or sick baby's life are critical in terms of a newborn's chance of survival & normal development.

Please help us reach our fundraising target of £29,000 to purchase this state of the art incubator and give local premature and sick babies the chance in life they deserve.



CALL TO ACTION

Louisa raises many valuable points during her interview and gives us an alternative view on the value a new Giraffe Omnibed could bring to Buscot Ward. There are many ways that people can help BIBS raise the £29,000 required to purchase this much needed piece of equipment. This could be anything from a sponsored challenge, a corporate activity or holding an event. The only limit is peoples imaginations.

To find out more please contact phil@bibs.org.uk

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