

Criticism for ban on baby cooing

A national support group for mothers has criticised a hospital that has banned visitors from cooing at babies because of human rights fears.

The National Childbirth Trust (NCT) said the move by the Calderdale Royal Hospital in Halifax was unnecessary.

NCT chief executive Belinda Phipps said: "Mothers are able to tell people not to look at their babies or pull the curtain round for privacy."

The hospital said its advice related to privacy and infection control concerns.

A hospital trust spokeswoman said the guidelines were aimed at families visiting very ill children on the neo-natal intensive care unit and not at visitors to the general maternity wards.

Ms Phipps said the hospital may have misinterpreted the NHS Essence of Care guidelines.

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Debbie Lawson, neo-natal manager

"Women are much more likely to be unhappy about other crucial matters such as midwife shortages and high intervention rates than whether their baby is being cooed over," Ms Phipps said.

"Essence of Care would suggest that no-one should go into a birth room without knocking and waiting for permission for from the woman to enter.

"When this principle is in place in every hospital, it might be time to ask women about cooing over babies.

"For now, Calderdale Royal Hospital needs to treat mothers as grown ups. Mother should be able to say what she wants to happen with her baby."

Some new mothers have already said they are astonished by the rules which stop people asking questions about their babies or looking at them in maternity wards.

Good intentions

Debbie Lawson, neo-natal manager at the hospital's special care baby unit, said: "We know people have good intentions and most people cannot resist cooing over new babies but we need to respect the child.

"Cooing should be a thing of the past because these are little people with the same rights as you

or me."

A spokeswoman for Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust said the advice was as much to do with reducing infection as it was upholding "rights".

In a statement she said: "Staff were wishing to highlight issues of potential confidentiality, especially for young babies and their parents in what can be emotional times.

"Infection control was also a key part of the message as the unit deals with very small babies with very vulnerable immune systems."

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