



## **Press Release**

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### **Simply the Best**

#### *Maidstone NHS manager wins top UK midwifery award*

A Maidstone NHS manager has won one of the UK's top midwifery prizes at the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) Annual Awards. Hilary Thomas scooped the award for Excellence in Recruitment and Retention for her work at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust. The awards are the UK's most prestigious midwifery awards, and were held in London on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2010.

Hilary, a hospital development project manager at the Trust, reversed the upward trend of the Trust's midwifery vacancy rates. Moving from a 10% vacancy rate at the start of 2009, the trust had filled all vacancies filled by the end of the year. This improved staff morale and reduced stress among staff.

Hilary did this by producing a brochure with contributions from midwives at the Trust, which gave a positive picture of the maternity service and helped to attract midwives to the Trust. This was combined with a national campaign and strengthened contacts with the local universities training midwives.

The award judges were hugely impressed with the entry, and praised the use of a staff engagement programme to improve morale. Using staff to attract new midwives to the trust was an excellent idea that was sustainable and cost relatively little to implement.

Cathy Warwick, General Secretary of the Royal College of Midwives, said: “This award highlights the important, innovative and pioneering work being done by Hilary and I congratulate her. When people are given the resources, support and freedom to develop their work, the result is better services, better care and better outcomes for women and babies.”

Hilary Thomas said: “We were delighted to have won the award. We have some fantastic staff and realized they are our best ‘selling point’. In providing a brochure to showcase their work and their smiling faces, we were able to show, both to them and to potential recruits, that Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust is an exciting place to work.

“We were lucky enough to have personal support from our Chief Executive and this demonstrated the profile of the Maternity Service within the Trust. I am so proud of them all.”

MTW were one of only two trusts to also achieve a runner up award in a different category – Research into Practice. The entry was submitted by Midwives Sarah Gregson and Jean Meadows.

The RCM recognised their achievement in introducing a biological nurturing approach to encourage breastfeeding by new mums. The pair were familiar with the research showing this approach had great potential, and set about making it work for the mums at MTW Trust.

Sarah and Jean explained the approach they took: “Biological Nurturing is a new approach to breastfeeding which builds on the well documented effect of early skin to skin contact.

“The mother is encouraged to lie in a position that naturally supports the baby, with the baby prone and vertical so its feet can brush against the mother’s thighs. If left in this position for a period of time after birth, the interaction between mother and baby releases the innate instinctive reflexes of both mother and baby to

initiate breastfeeding.

“Introducing new research findings into clinical practice can be challenging especially where midwives find it hard to accept that they have to ‘unlearn’ much of what has been previously taught in the past about breastfeeding.

“We therefore decided the best way to address this was to make a short film of biological nurturing taking place after a birth and then to show this to staff so they could see that it really worked. Hopefully they would then believe that it would work for them too - and it did!”

**For more information contact the RCM Press Office on 020 7312 3456, or Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust on 01622 226428**

Notes to editors

### **RCM Editor’s Notes**

The Royal College of Midwives is the voice of midwifery. We are the UK’s only trade union and professional organisation led by midwives for midwives. The vast majority of the midwifery profession are our members. The RCM promotes midwifery, quality maternity services and professional standards. We support and represent our members individually and collectively in all four UK countries. We influence on behalf of our members and for the interests of the women and families for which they care. For more information visit the RCM website at [www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk).

The 2010 awards are the eighth Royal College of Midwives Annual Midwifery Awards. Prizes are given across 13 categories. There is also an award for Midwife of the Year - The Johnson’s baby Mums’ Midwife of the Year - and two midwives will also receive an educational bursary (the Ruth Davis Awards). The winners will be announced at a ceremony attended by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal – Patron of The Royal College of Midwives - on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at the Royal Garden Hotel, Kensington, London.

**NHS Employers Award for Excellence in Recruitment and Retention** is presented to a team who have demonstrated an innovative approach and commitment to improving recruitment and retention of midwives.