Charity urges review of crematoria practices on dealing with baby ashes

THE STILLBIRTH and neonatal death charity Sands is calling for a review of crematoria practices to ensure a consistent approach to the cremation of very premature, stillborn and young babies across the UK.

The charity has written to organisations that run crematoria and to funeral directors in the UK urging them to ensure all efforts are made to increase the likelihood of producing ashes following the cremation of a baby.

It is also writing to every hospital trust in England and Wales to ask them to review their contracts with local crematoria and ensure that, whenever possible, the ashes that remain after a cremation are offered to parents.

The charity’s call follows a report published by the Mortonhall Investigation Team, set up by The City of Edinburgh Council after the discovery of poor practices at Mortonhall Crematorium.

Parents whose babies were cremated at the facility were told that there would be no ashes, however it was revealed in 2012 that ashes had been collected from baby cremations after more than 30 years. The ashes were then buried without the parents’ knowledge or consent.

The report by the investigation team, chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini, published 22 recommendations for establishing future best practice.

Sands wants a UK-wide review of practices because, in the charity’s view, there are inconsistencies in how crematoria deal with the ashes of babies, with some always providing babies’ ashes to parents and others routinely saying that there will be none.

‘This uncertainty around baby cremations is causing unnecessary distress to bereaved parents across the UK and generating distrust in current crematoria practice,’ said a charity spokesperson.

Warwickshire community nurses win Nursing Standard award

A CHILDREN’S community nursing team that developed an online learning tool has won the Nursing Standard Child Health award.

The South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust team, led by nurse consultant David Widdas (pictured with Zoë’s Place children’s nurse Gemma Alcock and patient Jaime Sale), developed an online workbook followed by a practical assessment to reduce variations in children’s care.

Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust’s school nursing team, represented by Kirsten Ellmore and Gayle Fitzpatrick, won the school nurse award for providing teachers with guidance on managing asthma attacks in class. Susan Lovett, a sister at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, won the patient’s choice award for arranging transport to help a terminally ill cancer patient go home for a few hours to have lunch with his family.

Child protection guidance has been issued by the Scottish Government to support professionals working with disabled children and young people. The Child Protection and Disability Toolkit is intended as a resource for practitioners and managers for use alongside existing child protection guidance. See www.withscotland.org

The Department of Health has issued more details about the national influenza programme for 2014/15, including plans to extend it to more children. The intranasal vaccine is to be used with eligible children – two, three and four year olds, those in clinical risk groups, and school-age children in pilot areas. For more information, go to tinyurl.com/Flu2014-15

Babies with skull deformation due to lying in the same position most of the time do not benefit from wearing a corrective helmet, according to a BMJ study. Researchers conducted a randomised controlled trial to establish whether positional skull deformation or plagiocephaly was corrected by using helmets and found no difference when the children reached age two. Skin irritation and other side effects were reported. Go to tinyurl.com/qzqsx4s