

Celebrating over 50 years of newborn screening

International Neonatal Screening Day - Tuesday 28 June 2022

International Neonatal Screening Day (ISND) gives us an opportunity to promote the importance and celebrate the achievements of newborn screening. It is more than 50 years since population screening of newborns began and the programmes have allowed lifesaving and life-enhancing care to be implemented, benefitting numerous families locally, nationally, and internationally.

“INSND aims to help raise awareness about the value of neonatal screening and encourage collaboration as a way of improving existing screening programmes and to take advantage of the latest scientific developments.” <https://screen4rare.org/insd/>

At MFT as part of the NHS Blood Spot Screening Programme, blood samples are collected from the heels of newborns on day five of life and tested for 10 rare conditions. This includes congenital hypothyroidism, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell disease, phenylketonuria and other rare metabolic disorders. Babies with a suspected disorder are urgently referred to the clinical teams for prompt treatment, allowing early interventions to improve quality of life.

The newborn screening laboratory analyses samples from around 55,000 babies per year, from across Greater Manchester, Lancashire and South Cumbria. The team strives to provide an excellent service with accurate, timely results, meeting national screening standards and working closely with colleagues across the whole screening and diagnostic assessment pathways. They are currently part of a national evaluation a new screening programme for severe combined immunodeficiency, which they hope will be of great benefit to affected newborns and their families.

The Newborn Hearing Screening Programme (NHSP) has screened over 11 million babies in the UK with more than 22,000 being diagnosed with a hearing loss. Within the LCO, Manchester NHSP is one of the largest programmes in England, with approximately 16,500 screens completed each year.

1 to 2 babies in 1000 are born with a hearing loss, and this increases to 1 to 2 in 100 for babies admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for more than 48 hours. The LCO NHSP offer the hearing screen to all babies either born or resident in Manchester with many being screened before discharge home from hospital. They also offer outpatient appointments for those babies born at home, those who were discharged before being seen hospital, or those who have moved to the area.

There are two screens that can be performed if necessary and the screen itself only takes a few minutes. If a screen positive result is obtained, babies are referred to one of six audiology departments across Manchester for diagnostic testing and are usually seen within four weeks of screen completion. It is important that the screen and any necessary referral, is completed soon after birth as hearing impaired children are at a high risk of delayed language development and communication skills.

Early diagnosis of hearing loss ensures that the correct management and support are in place for babies and their families thereby reducing this impact.

To learn more about newborn screening head over to the [NHS website](#).