

Wigmore's Supported Charity for 2008-2009

For the 12 months starting October 2008 our main supported charity was a local one: The Luton & Dunstable Hospital's *Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)* Appeal. We raised a total of £1,555.50 for this work and have received a letter of thanks from their appeal Organiser. You can read some more information about the *NICU* appeal below.

One in ten babies needs specialist care when they are born. Each year the NICU treats over 600 premature and critically ill babies. The existing unit was built for 20 cots, but an increase in the birth rate and advances in neonatal care have increased the demand for cots and the unit now has 29 cots in the same space. Despite this increase, the team still has to turn away about 20 requests for a cot each month as the Unit is completely full. As an interim solution, the hospital has built temporary accommodation alongside the existing NICU to house an extra six cots.

The L & D is one of only three hospitals in the East of England which can offer the highest level of NHS care to the sickest and most vulnerable newborns. A new NICU is planned, to house a further 17 cots. Building work is scheduled to start in early Summer 2009, and be completed by Autumn 2010. It will include some essential overnight accommodation for parents where they can be supported in preparing to care for their baby before they go home. NHS funding will cover the £7 million costs of the building, standard equipment and staffing, but the hospital wants to raise £1.5 million for specialist equipment.

The full cost of kitting out just one intensive care cot is £100,000 - but once the new cots are running (bringing the total to 37 cots), the hospital will be able to support significantly more babies every year.