



Health Matters

Know the signs of lung disease

STAFF at a Doncaster information service will be raising awareness of the signs and symptoms of lung cancer in August. Staff from St John's Information Service, based at the Tickhill Road Hospital site, Balby, will be out and about in the borough raising awareness of the disease and the importance of recognising signs and symptoms so it can be detected early. Lung cancer is one of the most common and serious types of cancer.

For more details ring 01302 796853 or email stjohinfo@rdash.nhs.u

Forging links for charity support

THE Blades have awarded one of Sheffield's largest employers the use of an executive box at Bramall Lane, to say thank you for raising thousands at a charity football tournament. Staff from Sheffield Forgemasters International raised £6,000 by entering two teams into Weston Park Hospital Cancer Charity's Team of Steel Cup. Twenty teams from the across the region took part in the fundraiser at The Lane for the Cancer Charity's 'Do Your Bit Campaign', which is raising money to provide a new Cancer Research and Treatment Suite at Weston Park Hospital.

New wristbands will alert medics

A NEW wristband scheme, which alerts medical staff to access vital information to help them care for people with learning disabilities, has been launched in Doncaster.

The brightly coloured silicon bands have been introduced by Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust (RDASH) to make it easy for the emergency services and staff on hospital wards to identify that the wearer has a Traffic Light Hospital Assessment, which provides all of the information to support them to have a positive hospital experience.

Hi-tech boost for advice service

A HEALTH, advice and counselling service for young people which went hi-tech and community-based six months ago, is hailing the move a success. Jigsaw, a service for young people aged 11-19 years, works in the community providing young people with free confidential advice, information and counselling on any issue which affects young people's health and well-being. Earlier this year, the staff launched a Facebook page, the use of mobiles and email to help them keep in touch with the young people.

A family has enlisted the help of Ed Balls to raise awareness of a little known condition.

Catherine Scott reports.

MIKEY Walsh is a cheeky five-year-old with a great sense of humour, winning over all he meets.

He sits on Ed Balls' knee, pretends to answer his phone and then punches him, rather harder than the Shadow Chancellor was expecting, with a boxing glove.

He has clearly won over Mr Balls.

Few people would realise that Mikey has cerebral palsy, caused by an infection passed from his mother when he was born. Now his parents are trying to raise awareness off Group B Strep (GBS). And they have enlisted the help of their MP Mr Balls to join them.

"We have had three children and I was not aware of Group B Strep," says Mr Balls, who first raised the issue with the then Health Secretary Andrew Lansley 18 months ago. Mr Balls now wants to know why a screening test for GBS is available in countries such as America, Canada and Poland and yet not on the NHS in the UK. "It seems strange that all those countries screen for GBS but we do not," says Mr Balls. "I am asking the Health Secretary for clarification on that matter."

From 12 hours old Mikey's mum Natasha could tell something was wrong. She and husband Chris raised concerns with doctors and midwives, but they were fairly dismissive.

At two days old they took Mikey to see a community midwife. "She was amazing and in my eyes, saved his life."

On examination, Mikey had lost weight and was hypothermic. Doctors did a lumbar puncture which produced milky spinal fluid and his parents were told there was meningitis – a consequence of GBS. He stopped breathing and had to be revived.

"What would have happened if we had taken him home like they said and he'd stopped breathing in the car?" says Chris from Wakefield.



FIGHTING BACK: Mikey Walsh with his mum Natasha, dad Chris and sister Bethany and local MP Ed Balls. Inset, Mikey in hospital as a baby.

He was rushed to intensive care and put on life support. The Walsh family were told that there was a chance Mikey wouldn't make it through the night and if he did, there was a good chance of brain damage. "We were devastated," says Natasha. "We were also angry as if I'd had the test for GBS when I was pregnant with Mikey it would have shown positive and I could have been given antibiotics and so could Mikey when he was born."

It then became a waiting game to see just what damage had been done to his brain tissue and how this would affect Mikey.

"The first 12 months were very hard for us as a family," says Natasha.

"Mikey was having up to six fits a day, he never slept and our family were reluctant to look after him because they knew we were so very nervous.

"On top of being

traumatised, we were exhausted. This put a lot of pressure on our marriage as we took it out on each other. We also had a five-year-old daughter, Bethany, who did not get a lot of our time.

However as Mikey got older he seemed to hit all his milestones, although not necessarily in the right order. "So, we were thinking that perhaps we had got through this unscathed. He is going to be okay.

"But Mikey was falling over a lot, he seemed to run with his right foot on his tiptoes and he carried his right arm awkwardly. He talked loads,

MPS' CALL FOR MORE SUPPORT

AN Early Day Motion has been signed by 27 MPs which states: "That this House supports Group B Strep Awareness Month in July 2013 and notes that this will raise much needed awareness of an infection that is recognised as the most common cause of serious infection in newborn babies; recognises that group B Streptococcus causes septicaemia, pneumonia and meningitis, which all require intensive care and treatment; acknowledges that most of these infections could be prevented; welcomes the Government's recent commitment to better prevention of these devastating infections, including supporting research and making available better diagnostic tests for GBS within the NHS as are available in other developed countries; and congratulates Group B Strep Support for the work it does to raise awareness."

but some words were quite hard to understand."

"Our consultant told us that Mikey has hemiplegia, which means he has Cerebral Palsy which only affects his right hand side of his body.

"I cannot describe how I felt or the thoughts that I had. I told nobody for a week and my husband was devastated. All his hopes for Mikey at that point were shattered.

"What has given us hope is that Mikey is himself; a superhero in our eyes. He beat meningitis as a newborn, he has overcome every obstacle he thinks he was put on this earth to entertain everybody and make people smile. He is so active and does karate and Thai boxing. Mikey does everything every other child does, it just takes more effort from him."

Although the Walshes feel lucky that Mikey is doing as well as he is, they are still campaigning for more awareness of GBS.

"We know we may not get screening on the NHS but we really want there to be more information out there from midwives and antenatal classes about the dangers of GBS," says Natasha.