

Friends of the Rotunda

Donations that Truly make a Difference

By Jane Dalrymple and Dr Karen Flood

On Monday 29th of July, Linda and Ken Walsh along with their family donated a cuddle cot to the hospital. To quote Linda from her Feileacain page "After Caoimhe arrived we wanted to do something for the Feileacain charity and for the Rotunda Hospital because they were both truly amazing." Their generous donation is their way of helping other families who also go on the difficult journey of losing a child.

In July 2012, Linda and Ken attended, excited, like so many others for her routine anatomy scan at 20 weeks gestation and was given the news that her baby's heart was not in the correct position (dextroposition) which was subsequently confirmed by the Prenatal Diagnosis team. A small hole in the heart (VSD) was also diagnosed by Dr Orla Franklin, Paediatric Cardiologist. A follow up scan at 25 weeks gestation indicated that the baby was behind in growth. Linda and Ken were counselled at length that these findings were concerning for a chromosomal abnormality (aneuploidy) and they agreed to an amniocentesis. The result of this test confirmed that their little baby girl had Trisomy 18 – Edwards Syndrome.

When we give our patients news like this they are understandably devastated and we strive to look after them with an holistic approach. Our multidisciplinary team aimed to ensure that the needs of Linda, Ken and their family were met in this pregnancy. When you tell couples that there is a problem with their baby they are already on a grief journey as the "normal" is lost. When we cannot "fix a baby" we have to help families through their pregnancy in the best possible way as they are now on a very different journey than the one they set out on. One thing that has proven to help families is the use of the memory boxes which are provided by the charity Feileacain. This allows families to start collecting mementos of their journey and these in time become precious memories. Once Linda and Ken accepted the diagnosis for their little girl they were gently nurtured through this experience. They named their baby Caoimhe and started to prepare themselves and their two other daughters for her arrival. Caoimhe arrived last November 2012. Although she was stillborn Linda and Ken now had another member of the family. Their main endeavour was to learn to live without her, which they are doing with great purpose and dignity and will always continue to do so.

More and more parents state that they wish to spend more time with their baby post bereavement either in the hospital or by bringing their baby home prior to burial. The cuddle cot looks like a conventional Moses basket however underneath the blanket is a device which discretely cools the base of the cot which helps to preserve the baby thus allowing families more time with their child.

The cuddle cot has already, unfortunately, been put to good use both in the hospital and in bereaved parents homes. We were very grateful to accept this cot at a reception held by the Friends of the Rotunda in the memory of Caoimhe and Aisling and in the presence of their families, members of the Feileacain association and staff of the hospital. Aisling's mother is a cousin of Linda's and a member of staff in the hospital.



Photo by Des O'Neill



By Dr Frances Gardiner

On the 25th October 2013, the Friends of the Rotunda hosted a unique event, a caring gesture by Bray Open Door Centre toward bereaved Rotunda parents. When tragedy strikes expectant parents, a dream is shattered, leaving them vulnerable and grieving. Staff at the Rotunda are acutely conscious of the importance of supporting parents around the time their baby dies. The bereavement support midwife, chaplain, bereavement social worker and staff involved in caring for mother and baby work very closely together.

Ann Charlton, chaplain at the Rotunda, has long stressed the need for respectful and discreet apparel for these tiny infants on their last fateful journey, noting that it is impossible to find sheets small enough to swaddle these tiny babies.

Two years ago, staff at the Rotunda and volunteers launched a white knitting crusade, producing an array of small articles of clothing, little hats, cardigans, sheets and blankets, suitable for tiny infants. Subsequently, members of Open Door Day Centre, a facility for adults with physical disabilities as a result of multiple sclerosis, stroke, motor neurone disease or spina bifida, heard about it, and were so moved that they determined, despite their own disabilities, to honour grieving parents by knitting little items of clothing to grace the little bodies. Some had never held knitting needles and wool before, some struggled due to hand and motor damage to negotiate the stitches. From little hats, mittens and booties to cardigans, sheets and blankets they produced an array of beautiful baby garments, which were presented in the Pillar Room to Ann Charlton for these special babies. Ann told us how much it meant to parents to see their little infants dressed so beautifully in white and wrapped so carefully in their little coffins due to the loving care of volunteer-knitters.