

Variable Height Maternity Cribs

By Simone Baker

I have been a member of my local Maternity Services Liaison Committee for about 1½ years now. At the bi-monthly meetings, I report regularly on the progress Disabled Parents Network is making, and of course give my input and views to other discussions from the prospective of a disabled parent. However, up until now, I hadn't really felt I'd directly achieved very much for disabled parents in the hospital

At the very first meeting MSLC meeting I attended, I photocopied and circulated details of an accessible maternity crib, which was fully height adjustable. Had this crib been available for me to use when I'd given birth to my daughter Lois (in 1996) it would have made the world of difference, the standard crib being just a fraction too high for me to lift Lois in and out of it unaided. Also, because she was my first baby, I was also a little more nervous about experimenting with my lifting techniques!

I wrote a general letter about my own experiences, detailing how an adjustable crib would have made my stay in hospital so much easier and providing me with the extra confidence in my abilities to manage with my new baby. This letter was used to accompany letters to potential funders in our quest to obtain the necessary funding to purchase one or more of these cribs,

About a month ago, I collected a registered letter from the post office, and was astonished when a cheque for £600 fell out of it! However, my excitement diminished a little when I realised the cheque was not made payable to me personally! The cheque was from Vodafone, and represented a donation from their Charitable Trust towards the purchase of a crib.

On the 18th October, I visited the Maternity Unit to trial two cribs manufactured by Bristol Maid. The sales representative had brought along two cribs. The first was a 'Garrow' crib, which is designed to be clamped to the side of the mothers bed to enable mother to tend to baby directly from her bed. This crib would be ideal for mothers who are confined to bed either because of their disability or as a result of a caesarean section. The second crib was a variable height crib, which can be adjusted electrically from a 700 to 900mm height. Again, ideal for wheelchair users, or, for somebody like myself, who is of short stature and has shortened arms and therefore a limited reach.

I caused some amusement during the trial, as I had borrowed one of Lois' dolls, (which happened to be dressed in a real baby-grow) in order that I could give the crib a thorough testing. Whilst I posed for photographs to be taken, a group of students looking around the maternity unit stopped and looked through to see what was going on. I reached into the crib, sat 'baby' up and turned her around to look at them all gawping in - which gave them all a good laugh, as they had been convinced that the baby in the crib was a real one!

Well, from my trial of the crib I would say that it would have been ideal for my specific requirements, and I urged the hospital to purchase both types of crib. They are in the process of obtaining a detailed quotation for two of the variable height cribs and 10 of the Garrow cribs. The approximate costs are ' Garrow Crib £200, Variable Height Crib £2,250 (which I was assured were not very different from a standard crib).

If anyone is involved with their local Maternity Services Liaison Committee, I would urge you to badger maternity units into obtaining these cribs. They really will improve things for Mums-to-be with

disabilities whilst staying on the maternity unit.

VARIABLE HEIGHT CRIB ' MANUFACTURED BY BRISTOL MAID

The approximate costs are ' Garrow Crib £230, Variable Height Crib £1,550

Contact details: Bristol Maid, Hospital Metalcraft Ltd, Blandford Heights, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7TG

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