

Inspectors are sent to protect patients in hospitals

at the centre of baby deaths scandal

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By Henry Bodkin

HEALTH inspectors have been sent into a hospital trust where dozens of deaths are being investigated, in order to protect mothers and babies.

The Care Quality Commission said it was taking "urgent action to protect people" at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust after a snap inspection found that doctors were failing to spot worrying symptoms on baby scans. They also highlighted concerns

about the ability of staff in the trust's emergency department to spot signs of potentially deadly sepsis.

The action comes weeks after it emerged that more than 100 cases of alleged poor care were being reviewed after dozens of families came forward with concerns that their babies may have been killed or seriously injured in a maternity unit accused of being obsessed with natural birth.

The number of cases to be considered by an independent review has

risen to 104, the *Health Service Journal* reported in September.

The CQC has now placed restrictions on the trust's legal right to offer, meaning that managers have to report weekly, detailing what they are doing to improve patient care.

The restrictions apply to the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford and the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

Inspectors were particularly concerned that maternity staff were failing to investigate concerns when foetuses

appeared abnormally still during scans. Professor Ted Baker, the CQC's chief inspector of hospitals, said: "We remain very concerned about the emergency department and maternity services at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust as a result of our inspections.

"This is why we have imposed urgent conditions on the trust's registration to safeguard patients.

"We are monitoring the trust extremely closely and continue to work

with NHS Improvement to ensure patient safety improves. We will return to check on whether sufficient improvements have been made, and will take further action if needed."

Full findings of the CQC's inspection will be published shortly, the organisation said.

Parents have previously said they were pressured into having natural births in midwife-supervised units. They claimed that a caesarean or forceps-assisted delivery would have pre-

vented brain damage. Concerns about the Shrewsbury and Telford maternity were first raised after the death of baby Kate Stanton-Davies in 2009.

A report found that she had died "avoidably" after two midwives failed to realise her birth was high risk, and ignored her parents' concerns.

Dr Edwin Borman, medical director at the trust, said: "We take the safety of our patients and their care very seriously. We are addressing all the areas raised by the CQC."