



PRESS RELEASE

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New-born baby screening

The UK media has reported that as from this week, and following a pilot study, babies will be screened for additional medical conditions.

The Gibraltar Health Authority's Department of Pathology has been involved since 2012 in the pilot study, which was run by Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust for the testing of Heel Prick samples, taken from all babies between 5 and 8 days old, for certain extra Genetic conditions in addition to those already checked.

The Pathology Department was pleased to be a part of this pilot study in order to offer a better service to our local population by identifying these rare Genetic disorders at a much earlier stage.

The extra conditions which will now also be tested for are:

1. Maple syrup urine disease
2. Homocystinuria
3. Glutaric acidaemia type 1
4. Isovaleric acidaemia

They are all inherited conditions where babies have problems breaking down amino acids, the "building blocks" of proteins.

A consequence of knowing about these at an early stage is that dietary advice can be given to parents to prevent a build-up of these harmful proteins in the system and thus reduce the impact of the disease.

The GHA would like to confirm that this additional screening will be applied in Gibraltar at the same time as in UK.

However, it is important to stress that these are rare conditions and that Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust, found only 20 confirmed cases of the four extra conditions, in 700,000 babies.