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Herald & News

Heidi seeks to help others

Addlestone: Personal tragedy spurs her on to create MAMA, support network for healthcare professionals

by **Jennifer Morris**

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AFTER the heartbreak of a still birth and a miscarriage, a mum has set up a nationwide advice service for mothers and midwives.

Heidi Eldridge, 31, of Meadow Drive, suffered tragedy when her son Aiden was stillborn in 2009, and just three months later she miscarried.

Feeling she did not receive adequate information about the risk of stillbirth and miscarriage during her pregnancy, particularly as she experienced gesticular diabetes, Mrs Eldridge launched MAMA (Mums and Midwives Awareness) Academy.

MAMA Academy provides healthcare professionals with knowledge and education to promote consistency of maternity care across the UK.

Inspired by her commitment and strength, Mrs Eldridge's husband, Steve, nominated her for the prestigious Tesco Mum of the Year award, for which she has been shortlisted.

Mrs Eldridge is one of 35 mums, chosen from 2,000, in with a chance of scooping the title at a ceremony at the Savoy hotel in March.

Commenting on launching MAMA Academy, Mrs Eldridge said: "I felt there was inconsistent information being given to pregnant women and that perhaps correct information could reduce the rate of stillbirths."

The academy also informs mums about health in pregnancy and when they should call a midwife for advice.

The information is gathered from professionals, including many who work at Ashford and St. Peter's Hospital.

"I don't feel I was told enough when I was pregnant with Aiden," said Mrs Eldridge.

"During pregnancy we all think everything's just going to be ok.

"We don't realise that about one in 200 babies are stillborn, and the statistics haven't changed in 10 years."

Mrs Eldridge, a proactive mum to Tobiah, two, is a part-time admin assistant and is also the hospital support co-ordi-

nator for Surrey Sands, a group for people who have lost a baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth.

Mrs Eldridge attends conferences and meetings across the UK to build up her knowledge, meeting hundreds of other mums along the way.

Of the potential award she said: "I am totally overwhelmed to have been shortlisted.

"Steve nominating me was his way of telling me how proud he is of me."

The shortlisted mums will be considered by a panel featuring Suzanna Scott, editor of the *Tesco* magazine, and celebrities Emma Forbes, Cherry Healey and Denise Lewis.

Judging has been taking place throughout throughout this month.

If Mrs Eldridge is one of the winning mums, she will be treated to a full makeover and her own *Tesco* magazine photo-shoot.

She would also be presented with her award, in front of her friends, family and celebrity guests. To find out more about the MAMA Academy, visit mamaacademy.com.



MAMA knows best: Heidi Eldridge with husband Steve and their son Tobiah.