

Who is Billie Hunter?

Over the next few months we'll be featuring interviews with key people connected with the Iolanthe Midwifery Trust, with the aim of giving you a better idea of what the Trust is about. In this first interview we ask: Who is Billie Hunter?

Tell us a bit about yourself - What is your role in the Trust?

I am the Chair, and have been since 2006 (this is my second 'term'). Before then I was a Trustee. I'm also Professor of Midwifery at Swansea University and a Visiting Professor at the University of Surrey.



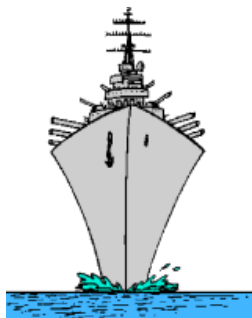
What's it like balancing work as a Professor and being a Trustee?

Balancing my day job as a Professor and being Chair of IMT can sometimes be a little tricky, especially when deadlines coincide! However, as both roles are firmly embedded in the world of midwifery, more often than not there are mutual benefits, so that the work I am doing as a professor can benefit Iolanthe and vice versa

Most of my Iolanthe work is done in the evenings and at weekends, and my employers are supportive of me attending meetings during the working week. Swansea University is keen to support staff in undertaking 'third mission' activities such as charity work, which are of benefit to the wider community.

How did you come to be involved with the Iolanthe Midwifery Trust?

I started off as an Award holder (I received an Iolanthe Research Fellowship from 1999 -2001). This meant that I met several of the Trustees at my interview, and became interested in the work of the Trust. A couple of years later the Chair of the Trustees contacted me and said they were looking for new Trustees and asked if I would be interested in applying. I knew nothing about charity work, but as I had benefitted so much personally from my Iolanthe Award, I felt that I really wanted to give something back.



What's the most surprising reaction you've had from people when you mention the name "Iolanthe"?

"Is that a charity for sailors?? How come you are involved??" (They had heard of the HMS Iolanda and made some links between that and the name Iolanthe!)

What is it that the Trust actually does?

The Trust uses its funds to support the development of midwives, for the ultimate benefit of women and babies. We support a number of student and qualified midwives every year to undertake differing types of professional development. This includes giving student midwives the opportunity to experience different maternity care settings, and supporting qualified midwives to attend conferences and study days and to do further education and training. Our new Tricia Anderson Award also allows us to fund innovative and creative projects that might not received funding elsewhere.

So the key work of the Trust is to manage the funds carefully, including looking for opportunities to fund raise, and then to ensure that the available funds are used effectively to support midwives doing what they do best – give great care to women and their families!

The Trust recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, what do you think is the secret of its survival?



Gosh – that's quite a question! I think the key secret of its survival must be the enthusiasm and commitment of the Trustees and the Trusts' supporters (several of whom have been involved with Iolanthe since the outset). I am constantly impressed by the motivation of the Trustees, who put in a lot of personal time and energy for no reward other than feeling that they are 'making a difference' to midwifery and hence to maternity care. Also, although Iolanthe remains true to its original principles, it has also not been afraid to change with the times. So new awards and new partnerships have emerged, which are responsive to the needs of the time.

On a more practical note, the Trust has benefited immensely from the support of a paid worker. Even though we are only able to afford to pay for a few hours admin support a week, this is invaluable. This worker (the Executive Director) is really the public face of Iolanthe, and acts as the day-to-day link with applicants, Trustees, marathon runners, the Charities Commission – you name it, she's your woman! The Trustees also get great support and advice from our bank, Adam and Co, whose guidance as been especially valuable in the economic crisis.

What is the hardest / most difficult thing about being a Trustee?

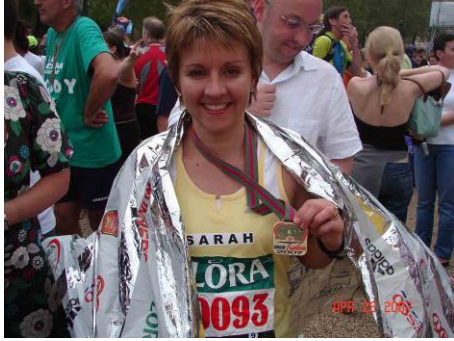
Not having enough available funding to support the many excellent applications that we receive every year. It can be very hard to decide.

What is the best thing about being a Trustee?

The best thing for me is always meeting the award holders and members of their families at an Awards Event. There is usually a real 'feel good factor' at these events. It is great to hear firsthand about the various projects and experiences, and to learn how getting the support from Iolanthe has boosted midwives' morale and confidence.



With so many charities, why should midwives/women support Iolanthe?



Iolanthe is a smallish charity that relies heavily on the support of women and midwives to carry out its work, whether this is via fundraising, applying for our Awards, or by being a Friend of Iolanthe. We take great care to ensure that our investments and partnerships are ethical, and we do not invest our funds in any companies whose business could be detrimental to women and their babies (for example, we do not have investments in formula milk companies or in the tobacco industry).

In a world of competing health care charities which deal with the 'big issues' such as cancer research, the importance of high quality midwifery care for health and wellbeing can tend to go unappreciated. However, those of us who work in maternity care – and of course, those receiving maternity service care – know only too well the difference that midwifery care can make.



Thank you Billie