

Patient information

Neonatal Community Service information pack

Support from the Neonatal Community Service (NCS)

We are a team of experienced, specialised Neonatal nurses, based on the Neonatal unit (NNU) at the West Suffolk Hospital. We work both clinically on NNU and as a part of the Neonatal Community team.

We aim to work with you as parents/ care givers to support and empower you, enabling you to care more confidently for your baby at home. The Neonatal community team members (NCS) aim to meet up with you during your baby's stay and together identify your baby's needs, putting together a plan of care that is best for your baby's individual needs.

There are things that you as parents/care givers can do in preparation for home:

- **Register your baby with your GP**

Most GP practices will let you ring up to start this process, and you **do not** have to register your baby's birth in order to do this. It is **very important, that your baby is registered with a GP** prior to discharge. The GP will receive electronic discharge paperwork and also if medication/ milk prescription is required, then you are able to get these for your baby. Any equipment, medication or prescription milk will be provided for the first few days' worth, on discharge to start you off.

- **Watch the basic life support (BLS) link**

NNU or NCS staff can provide you with this link, it takes around 20 minutes to watch, a BLS leaflet will be given alongside the link. You will then be invited to attend a basic life support demonstration from one of the NCS or NNU staff members. This is not compulsory; however, we do strongly recommend that you attend.

- **Complete a naso-gastric tube competency (if required)**

If your baby is likely to be going home with an NGT in place, each parent/care giver who is going to be using the NGT, should complete a competency. This can be assessed by NNU or NCS staff and should be completed over several NGT feeds before assessment can be fully completed.

- **Know how to meet your baby's individual needs**

- ✓ How to sterilize (breast pump/bottles)
- ✓ Provide your own bottles that you will be using at home, so your baby gets used to these. This is essential to support continued good feeding regimes at home for your baby.
- ✓ How to make up your baby's feeds (breast milk/powered milk feeds/liquid milk)
- ✓ How to wash or bath your baby
- ✓ How to check their temperature confidently
- ✓ How to place them in a cot/car seat/bouncy chair safely, reducing the risks of cot death
- ✓ 'Room in' on NNU with your baby over 24 - 48hrs to get to know your baby more, with the NNU staff on hand for support. Talk to NNU/ NCS staff about when this is a suitable time for you to do.

NNU and NCS staff will support you in achieving the above, increasing your confidence in taking your baby home. It is not unusual to feel nervous about taking your baby home for the first time following your stay on NNU. The NCS team will then be around to help support you further and reassure you when we visit you at home.

When you are discharged home from NNU

1. NCS aim to visit you and your baby within 24/48 hours of discharge; this appointment will be made with you before you leave NNU, so you know what day to expect us.
2. NCS will take observations if needed, record weight and discuss how your baby is feeding and progressing. Time will be given to answer any concerns, or questions you might have. NCS will leave you with a clear plan until the next NCS visit or discharge from NCS.

3. The NCS team will be available over the phone (during NCS hours) **if you have any questions or concerns in regards to feeding or general preterm/term behaviour only**. If we are off duty NNU will always be able to take a message for when the next NCS member is in.
4. We will liaise with the dietitian if this is required. This dietitian will be the same team that your baby would have been seen by on NNU. We can also liaise with any other teams (multi-disciplinary) as required for your baby's needs.
5. Contact with your health visitor will be made on discharge from NNU and then again on discharge from NCS. Health visitors should contact you to arrange their appointments. If you do not have contact from your health visitor, please let a member of the Team know.

What if I have a problem at home?

If your baby requires a nasogastric tube replacing then please contact NCS via the Neonatal Unit 01284 713251. If outside of NCS hours, the NNU staff will arrange for you to go to NNU for replacement if replacement is required.

Help and support is **always** available for you and your baby **no matter what time or day of the week**.

If your baby is **unwell** and you need urgent help, then **do not hesitate to call 999**, or go to your nearest Emergency Department. Do not contact NNU for advice, we cannot assess an unwell baby over the phone. If it is felt to be **non-urgent, please either contact NHS 111 service or your GP for an appointment**. GP's expect to see babies under 1 years of age, and especially babies that have needed NNU support. You are not wasting your GP's time by getting your baby checked over, if you have concerns about them being unwell.

How often will we visit?

The number of visits we make will depend on each individual family and the needs identified. The NCS team will guide you through, using our experience of caring for others in similar situations. Our working hours are Monday to Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm.

We cover a large geographical area, Newmarket to Stowmarket, and Diss to Haverhill, so we do ask families to be understanding about punctuality for home visits. We will endeavor to ring should we be delayed, but this may not always be possible.

As the NCS team also work on NNU, there may be times out of our control that NCS visits will need to be rearranged or cancelled.

We may bring a paediatrics student/student midwife or a newly qualified nurse with us. We will also try our best to inform you before our visit.

On discharge from NCS

We ask that any loan equipment you are given is cared for and returned to us promptly when no longer required. Breast pumps and any other equipment loaned to you, needs returning prior to discharge from NCS, as we only have a very limited supply and want to help as many parents/care givers as we can with their use.

We will notify any multi-disciplinary team involved in your baby's care so they are made aware of our discharge. We then give a follow up call a couple of weeks later to you, to make sure that you are in contact with your health visitor, and that your baby is continuing to do well.

It is important that your baby continues to attend any follow up hospital appointments that have been made for them.