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# Welcome to the Neonatal Unit

## Contact numbers:

Intensive treatment unit  
(ITU)/high dependency unit (HDU)

**0300 019 2330**

Special care/nursery

**0300 019 2566**

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For most of you reading this, finding yourself in NICU is not something you are likely to have expected. Many people have told us the first few days can feel like a bit of whirlwind. We hope you find the following information useful during your time on the unit. Please feel free to ask any staff member about any questions you may have.

## The unit

The Neonatal Unit is made up of 20 cots. We have four intensive care cots and six high dependency cots in our intensive treatment unit (ITU) room. We also have 10 Special Care (SC) cots in our nursery. We care for babies who need specialist care because:

- they are born early (prematurity)
- they are unwell at or after birth

The ITU room has 10 cots including two side rooms. Your baby is most likely to be admitted into ITU for observation. This is where your baby may receive breathing support, fluids, and other specialist care. Here you will be looked after by a nurse who is caring for your baby and one other baby (known as 2:1).

The nursery has 10 cots including two side rooms. Babies move into the nursery once their care is focused on growth and nutrition. This helps them prepare for home or to go to the post-natal ward/transitional care unit (TCU) if the mother is still a patient. Within the nursery, a nursery nurse or nurse will provide care for your baby and up to three others (known as 4:1).

Our team is made up of neonatal consultants, advanced neonatal nurse practitioners (ANNPS), nurses, nursery nurses, a clinical psychologist, an occupational therapist, physiotherapists, and a dietician to provide all round care for your baby/babies.

## Discharge coordinator

The discharge coordinator is based in the nursery (special care) and has the responsibility for planning discharges. They also oversee the day-to-day management of the nursery and the wellbeing of the babies in our care, their parents and families, and the nursing team. We take pride in supporting parents to feel happy and confident in caring for their babies at discharge home from hospital. The discharge coordinator can support you with training and education to prepare all the family for this exciting time. Please get in touch if you ever have any questions or concerns.

## Matron and other services

Our matron of the unit is available Monday to Friday to answer questions or discuss your baby's care further if needed, as well as the patient advice liaison service (PALS), whose contact details can be found on the University Hospitals Dorset website.

## Getting ready to take your baby home

When your baby is getting ready to go home, the medical team will decide a date to work towards. We recommend you to stay in with your baby/babies to learn skills for home while having the medical and nursing team on hand to answer questions and support this transition.

We hope this has given you an introduction and understanding of the neonatal unit, what to expect, and to explain who is here to help you on your journey. If you have any questions, please ask the nursing team and they can direct you further.

## Infection prevention

Babies are more likely to catch infections when newborn. Please gel your hands with alcohol gel when entering the hospital and avoid touching your face and phone afterwards. Please wash your hands when entering the room where your baby/babies are and gel them afterwards. Use the wipes provided to clean your phone regularly. We have coat hooks along the corridor. Please hang up your coats and outdoor layers as these are not permitted in the nurseries. Layers that have been worn while smoking must be removed. Uniforms (including school) and overalls should not be worn to the neonatal unit. Please change after work or before entering the unit.

**Please do not visit if you are unwell and do not allow any visitors including siblings and grandparents to visit if they are unwell, have a cough, cold, fever, rash, or upset stomach.**

## Safety

Your baby's/babies' safety is our priority, and we are a secure unit. Please ring the doorbell and wait patiently for the doors to be opened. Do not let anyone else into the unit who you do not know. Be aware to not tailgate others or let anyone in who tailgates you.

We will regularly update parents/carers during ward rounds, throughout the day, or over the phone. Information will only be given over the telephone to parents/carers or health professionals involved in your baby/babies care.

You and your visitors may be asked to leave or stay within the unit in the event of a security incident, emergency, or clinical procedure.

## FiCare specialist nurse:

The FiCare nurse supports your journey through NICU. They can help you to carry out daily care for your baby while in hospital and to help prepare for home. They can offer teaching for you at cot-side such as care, feeding, bathing, baby massage, and resuscitation training.

The FiCare nurse also works to reduce any practical things that might stop you feeling able to spend time with your baby. They help to make sure you have access to parking permits and food vouchers. They can help those parents who need extra support with travel or accommodation. They also arrange meet ups such as coffee mornings in the community.

## Social media and coffee mornings:

We have a Facebook group 'Dorset NICU support' which you are welcome to join. This is used as a platform to advertise our monthly coffee mornings. These are held on different days of the week based around Poole, Bournemouth, and Christchurch. We offer different activities such as walks, meet ups, and sensory play. We also run holiday themes such as meet Santa, Halloween disco and Easter egg hunt. Join us to make friends, have refreshments, and share experiences in a safe space. Parents also like to use the Facebook group to share their journey with other parents, ask questions, and give peer support.

## Feeding team

Feeding your baby is an important role as a parent and an amazing bonding experience to have with your baby. We will support you in your feeding choices and encourage you to be involved as much as possible. All our nursing staff and nursery nurses are able to support you with feeding. We have an International Board Certified Lactation consultant and a large infant feeding team here. They offer additional support to guide you on your feeding journey through NICU. They are able to answer any questions you may have about feeding your baby or expressing.

## Therapy team

The therapy team on NICU is made up of specialist physiotherapists and occupational therapists who are here to help support you and your baby during your journey. Your baby's/babies' brain is growing very quickly at this time, and we can help you support their motor and sensory development. We can also help you understand how your baby is trying to communicate with you. This will help you support their daily care and interact with confidence. During your stay, you and your baby will meet your named therapist, but please feel free to chat to any of the team. The therapy team will continue to work with you after discharge in our outpatient clinics. They will provide advice for encouraging early play and development skills.

It is important you are involved in the decision making and everyday care of your little one(s). **Parents and carers are welcome on the unit at all times.** This is so we can work with you, and you can be involved in all aspects of your baby's care and development. We want you to feel able to spend as much time as possible with your baby while they are on the unit. We know this can bring practical and emotional challenges, for example if you have other children or caring responsibilities. If there are any barriers to you being able to visit, please let us know so we can support you.

## Visiting

We encourage parents and carers to hold and have skin-to-skin with their baby/babies as much as possible. Please discuss this with the nurse helping you to look after your baby to determine when this is appropriate. To reduce the risk of infection, only parents and siblings can hold or touch the baby within ITU/HDU. Siblings can hold the baby/babies when lines are removed such as cannulas/long lines. Grandparents can do so when the baby/babies move into the nursery/special care, with your permission.

Any other visitors over the age of 16 years (separate to grandparents and siblings) can visit from 2.30-6pm. To reduce noise levels, limit exposure to infection, and account for space on the unit, we ask these visitors are limited to two per day. For security reasons we ask that you meet your visitors outside the unit and then bring them in. A maximum of three people are allowed around the bed space at any time.

## Parking

Parking is free, but you need a parking form. Please ask the nursing staff for a signed parking form. You can take this to the parking enquires office outside the West Entrance. They will give you a temporary barrier pass to use in the patient and visitor parking in Car Park C. To access this car park, take the first left after the bus stop area and follow the road around to the West Entrance.

## Facilities

On your admission to the neonatal unit, you will be shown around the clinical unit and the facilities you can use during your stay. The unit is heated to around 25 degrees to help keep the babies warm. This can be a hot and dry environment, so please remove your coats and put them on our coat hooks which can be found in the reception area in our parent's lounge.

We have a video and picture system called V-Create. If you sign up to this, we can send you pictures and videos of your baby/babies directly to your phone, day or night. Please ask the nurse looking after you to show you how to get started.

Parents and siblings can use the parents lounge to relax, watch TV, and have refreshments. Please label all food and drink in the fridge with the labels provided. Help yourself to our snack cupboard where you can find snacks like crisps, cereal bars, pasta pots, soups, and porridge pots. There are also tea and coffee facilities and lockers. When you enter the unit via reception there are toilets, baby change and showers to the left. There is also a toilet on the unit, located down the middle corridor between ITU and Special Care.

We have £5 meal vouchers you can use for the Atrium Cafe and Cafe West. Each parent or sibling can be given one of these per day. Please ask the nursing team for your voucher(s).

We have two family rooms next to Special Care with ensembles and one side room off ITU that parents/carers can stay in overnight. These rooms are mostly reserved for those whose baby/babies are nearly ready for home. However, if the room is available, parents can stay overnight on an ad hoc basis. There are also two isolation/side rooms in ITU and two in Special Care that parents can stay in with their baby while receiving care.

## Unit routines/what's on?

**Nurturing time is 6-7.30pm daily.** Throughout the whole day we encourage skin-to-skin, cuddles, or containment holds in the incubator, talking or reading to your baby, and feeding your baby. During nurture time we will place particular focus on reducing noise, light, and invasive procedures such as taking bloods. This is to give you protected time as a family to enjoy these activities in a more calming environment.

On Monday morning, we have 'cake, cuppa, cha and craft' mornings in the parent's coffee lounge. Join in to have a drink, cake and do some crafts if you fancy it, and meet other parents/carers.

We have a **pizza evening 6-7pm on a Thursday** in the parent's lounge. Come along to have some delicious pizza and chat to other families on the unit. We cater for vegetarian, vegan, and gluten free.

## What to bring in

As soon as you can, please provide nappies and cotton wool for your baby's/babies' care. Blankets from home are great for when having skin-to-skin or cuddles. Staff will let you know when your baby is ready to wear clothes and potentially move from their incubator to a cot. Please label all clothes, blankets, sheets, and muslin cloths. Please provide a washing bag to keep dirty laundry in to take home to wash. You are welcome to bring one soft small toy for your baby/babies to go into cot or incubator. Please wash it before use and then once a week to prevent infection. If you are sterilising expressing kits or bottles, please provide a bottle brush to use.

## Support for you and your baby

You are the most important person to your baby. Our family integrated care team (FIC) is here to support you and your baby/babies throughout your NICU stay. In the team we have a clinical psychologist, FICare specialist nurse, occupational therapist and physiotherapists.

## Psychology service:

Your baby/babies stay on the neonatal unit can bring a mixture of emotions and practical challenges. It is important to know that any feelings and actions you experience are all natural responses to an often challenging and uncertain situation and that support is available if you feel you need it. Our clinical psychologist offers a confidential space to listen, help you make sense of what is happening, and reduce any stress you may be experiencing. If you would like to meet with the clinical psychologist, then please let your nurse know.

## Ward rounds

Morning ward rounds take place daily in the ITU room from 9am. They take place twice weekly in the nursery. The ward round is when the medical team visits each baby at their cot-side. They review the care and plan. Parents are encouraged to take part and ask any questions. On some days there may be a large group of staff around your baby's bedside. This is because the ward round can include a dietician, physiotherapists, occupational therapist, pharmacists, psychologist, and medical/nursing students. This team is there to support you and your baby/babies and to make plans to support their growth and development.

## Team visits at cot-side

The NICU team has a wide range of people who may come and introduce themselves to see if they can offer support to you or baby. These include occupational therapists, physiotherapists, dieticians, speech and language therapists, psychologists, and the hospital chaplaincy service. If a team member arrives to do this when it is not a good time for you (for any reason), please let them know you would prefer them to visit you later. You can also let us know if you would prefer an appointment time, or if you would prefer to speak to people away from your baby's cot space so you have more privacy. If there is any service listed above that you do not wish to come to you, please let the nursing team know.