

Coming to Chameleon Ward from the intensive care units at GOSH: information for families

This leaflet explains about the process of transferring a child from the Paediatric and Neonatal Intensive Care Units (PICU/NICU) at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) to Chameleon Ward. When your child's condition improves and they no longer need specialist intensive care, they will transfer to Chameleon Ward once the appropriate bed is available.

Throughout your stay on intensive care, your child will most likely have been reviewed daily by the surgical team who are based on Chameleon Ward. Before your child is moved, the intensive care medical team will meet with Chameleon Ward doctors to explain fully about your child's clinical development. The nursing staff will also be given a full explanation about your child's care.

The aim of both these 'handovers' is to make sure that everyone caring for your child knows about the reason they needed intensive care, their current condition and planned treatment.

Where possible and necessary, children transferred out of intensive care will initially stay in our high dependency unit (HDU) bay. This bay is a step down from intensive care and has one nurse to two patients. Your child will be allocated a 'named nurse' for each shift, although they will also be responsible for the care of several other children at the same time.

We cannot accommodate any parents to stay in this bay, but do welcome parents any time of the day they wish to sit with their child. We will continue to provide accommodation for both parents elsewhere in the hospital or local area while your child is in our HDU bay.

We have a dedicated quiet time between 1pm and 3pm, where we have minimal nursing and medical interventions and prefer that only parents visit their child. During the quiet time, the lights are dimmed and noise is kept to a minimum. The aim of quiet time is to promote rest for the children which is vital for healthy growth and development.

All of your child's meals will be provided on the ward; special diets are available on request. If you are breastfeeding your baby and staying in hospital accommodation, you are entitled to food vouchers. Please ask ward staff for the form to request these. On Chameleon Ward we have a breastfeeding room, solely dedicated to mums who may need to express while their baby is not able to take full breast feeds for whatever reason.

We can also provide facilities on the ward to store expressed breast milk until your baby will need it. Baby milk and food is provided on the ward, as are nappies.

As your child no longer needs to stay in the HDU bay, we will transfer them to the main ward. The number of patients being looked after by each nurse will increase but we can assure you that your child will continue to be monitored and reviewed as they recover. Unfortunately, once your child is transferred to the main ward, we will only be able to accommodate one parent.

Adjusting to life after intensive care

When a child is discharged from PICU/ NICU, this is usually a positive sign that your child is getting better and no longer requires such specialist intensive care. However, parents tell us that they can also feel stressed and anxious at this time. For example, it can take time to get used to not having the one-to-one nursing care and constant monitoring that your child will have received on PICU/NICU.

It can also take time to adjust to only one parent or carer being able to stay overnight. Most families find that they worry less with time and as they get to know the staff on the new ward. On Chameleon Ward, we appreciate that you have probably been an inpatient for some time by this point and may have recurring uncertainties about any number of matters.

For this reason, we offer parents of any patient who has come to us from intensive care – as well as any other patient who has stayed longer than two weeks – a complex care meeting once a week on the ward, facilitated by one of our Deputy Ward Managers (DWM). This is an open opportunity for you to discuss any uncertainties you may have about aspects of care or current treatment. From this meeting, we are able to follow up issues raised, and clarify any specific queries with the surgical team or wider multi-disciplinary team.

If you have any questions, please talk to your named nurse.

Compiled by Chameleon Ward and PICU/NICU in collaboration with the Child and Family Information Group

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