Leaving the Paediatric/Neonatal Intensive Care Units at GOSH

Information for families

Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust
This leaflet explains about the process of discharging a child from the Paediatric and Neonatal Intensive Care Units (PICU/NICU) at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH). This leaflet supports the information that the intensive care team will give you before and after leaving the unit. When your child’s condition improves and he or she no longer needs specialist intensive care, we will arrange transfer to another ward. The medical and nursing staff will discuss with you the most appropriate place for your child to receive ongoing care; this may be another ward at GOSH or it may be a ward at your local hospital.

Transfer to another ward at GOSH
Your child is likely to be transferred to another ward at GOSH if:

• He or she needs to carry on having specialist care or investigations
• He or she is already a regular patient at GOSH and is receiving ongoing care here
Occasionally, your child is transferred to another ward at GOSH because a bed is not available at your local hospital. We will transfer your child to the most appropriate ward at GOSH until the bed becomes available.

There are many different specialties at GOSH dealing with a wide variety of complex conditions. We will try to transfer your child to the most appropriate ward, so that he or she can receive ongoing care. Before your child is moved, the medical team will meet the ward doctors to explain fully about your child’s condition and treatment. 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 your child needed intensive care, his or her current condition and planned treatment.

The hospital can only guarantee accommodation for one parent once your child leaves intensive care. On some wards it is possible for one parent to sleep by their child’s bed, but if space is limited, the Family Services department will arrange alternative accommodation in or near the hospital. If both parents want to stay, the Family Services department can supply a list of local hotels for which you will pay a reduced rate.

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. Baby milk and food is provided on the ward, as are some nappies for the first few days, but then you will need to bring in your own supply.

When your child is well enough to be transferred to the ward, he or she will require a less intensive level of nursing and medical input, compared to what was required on PICU/NICU. On the ward, your child will be allocated a ‘named nurse’ for each shift, although he or she will also be responsible for the care of several other children at the same time.
Transfer to a ward at your local hospital

Babies on NICU are transferred to other neonatal or paediatric units as soon as they do not need the specialist services at GOSH anymore. Premature babies may need to go to other neonatal intensive care units to continue to recover and grow over longer periods of time. Babies who are born within the North London Perinatal Network can be transferred to any hospital within the network according to their clinical need. This may not be the hospital in which they were originally born. This is to provide the best possible care for your baby as well as trying to keep him or her as close to your family home as possible.

From PICU, we will arrange for your child to be transferred back to your local hospital. Occasionally this is not possible, but we will try to find another hospital as close to home as possible. It is important that your local health services are involved as soon as possible to plan any ongoing care that your child may need at home.

The nursing and medical staff at GOSH will tell your local hospital about everything that has happened to your child while in intensive care, and the treatment needed to meet his or her needs now and in the future. The nurses at GOSH will arrange transport for the journey, and a nurse will accompany your child. One parent can travel with them, but you can also make your own way home if you prefer. Babies still requiring ongoing intensive care will be transferred by a doctor and a nurse, and there may not be enough room for a parent to come in the ambulance as well.

If you have been staying in hospital accommodation at GOSH, please leave your room as soon as possible so it can be given to another parent in need, returning the key to the Family Services department. Please make sure you have all your belongings with you when you leave. Your deposit will be returned to you.

If your child has any follow-up appointments planned, we will send you a letter in the post, so please make sure we have your correct details.
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.

However, if you have any particular concerns about your child’s discharge plans, please discuss them with the staff on PICU/NICU. The Family Liaison Sisters can also offer support after your child has been transferred if you need them.

Sources of information and support

We recognise that your child’s needs (and your family’s) continue beyond intensive care. These needs may include those related to health and education, as well as social, emotional and psychological needs. The team can give you information about organisations that can help and refer you to them if you want. Previously, we have referred families to various organisations, such as charities, voluntary groups, schools and education departments, local mental health teams and social services.

There are also some organisations that you can contact yourself, now or at any point in the future:

Contact a Family
Free phone: 0808 808 3555
Website: www.cafamily.org.uk

Family Lives
Free phone: 0808 800 2222
Website: www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau
via the Social Work department on level 2 Southwood corridor or details of local offices in the phone directory
Website: www.adviceguide.org.uk
If you have any questions about your child’s transfer from intensive care, please contact the Family Liaison Sisters on 020 7813 8207