Facilitating the Transfer Process within North West London Perinatal Network (NWLPN): Improving Parental Experience

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Background
Transfer represents a critical and vulnerable time for babies and their families. Parents at the NWLPN Parent Representative Group expressed views that transfer was anxiety provoking at best and at worst immensely distressing and asked that the Network addressed these challenging issues. A functioning Perinatal Network depends on timely and appropriate transfers to deliver high quality care to mother and baby in the appropriate setting.

Aims
• To improve the experience of perinatal transfer for families.
• Provide a framework for the Network to prepare for and organise the transfer of babies to and from their units.

Parents’ quotes
‘The only thing after transfer we had to go hunting for everything, nobody showed us...’

‘The nuances and subtleties of the behaviour of the baby is difficult to convey in a letter’

‘Unfortunately he did (put put back on oxygen and started antibiotics) because the new unit was unfamiliar with his behaviour and needed to play safe’

Rating of preparation for transfer
1. Explanation you received as to why and where your baby was being transferred
2. Preparation you received from the doctors
3. Preparation you received from the nurses
4. The information you received about the differences between the 2 hospitals
5. If you were given any written information was it helpful
6. Openness of unit staff to answering your questions
7. The amount of trust you had in unit staff to care for you and your baby
8. If you visited the new unit your baby was being transferred to how did you find this experience

Rating of transfer experience
Included in the transfer guidelines are:
Consultation-based best practice guidelines for working with parents in the period around perinatal transfer
Staff checklist
Parent checklist
Pre arranged visit to unit of transfer as appropriate / possible
Welcome letter and information leaflet at receiving unit
(Available at www.neonatal.org.uk)
Parental handover letter
Nursing and medical transfer summaries
Telephone handover also if transfer carried out by transport team

Results
Transfers
• 450 transfers within NWLPN or to Specialist unit in 21 months
Response rate
• 76 questionnaires analysed =17% of total number of transfers
Type of transfer
• Emergency postnatal 19
• Back Transfer to local hospital in NWLPN 45
• Transfers to Specialist unit 12
Rating of experience
Parents were asked to rate aspects of their transfer experience:
• 8 questions on preparation for transfer
• 8 questions on settling in to the new hospital
• Opportunity given for free text
Answers were rated on 5 point Likert Scale:
• 1 - very poor to 5 - excellent
In preparation for transfer
• 79% of answers rated 4 or 5, good or excellent
In settling into new hospital
• 80% of answers were rated 4 or 5, good or excellent

Strengths
Explanation re transfer
Timing of information
Welcome to new unit
Answering questions
Communication with unit
Trust relationships

Challenges
Explaining differences between units
Provision of written information
Experience of visits pre transfer
Induction to new unit
Communication with Maternity units

References: DH Toolkit for High Quality Neonatal Services 2009

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There is no such thing as a baby, without a mother an infant cannot exist
Donald Winnicott, Paediatrician and Psychoanalyst (1956)