

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

Naylor H¹, Ronnie L^{1,4}, Hurlston R^{2,3}, Ford G^{2,3}

North West London Perinatal Network¹, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust², Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust³, Chelsea and Westminster NHS Trust⁴

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.



***There is no such thing as a baby,
without a mother an infant cannot exist***

Donald Winnicott, Paediatrician and Psychoanalyst (1956)

Process

The project was funded by NWLPN and led by a Clinical Psychologist who consulted with parents whose baby had undergone a transfer, together with nursing, medical staff and allied health professionals from 7 Network hospitals.

The purpose of this consultation was to:
Identify the challenges of the transfer process for parents and staff
Seek potential solutions to the identified problems
Understand the variables and inconsistency in practice
Highlight the positive aspects of transfer
Share examples of best practice
Develop Network guidelines

Guidelines were developed to improve the quality and continuity of care for babies and their families and recommendations made for future practice.

Parents' experiences are continually audited by anonymous survey sent out after transfer.

This enables the NWLPN to:
Monitor consistency,
Identify areas of improvement and good practice
Highlight any aspects of the transfer experience that continue to be rated less well and require further action.

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 (get put back on oxygen and started antibiotics) because the new unit was unfamiliar with his behaviour and needed to play safe'

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

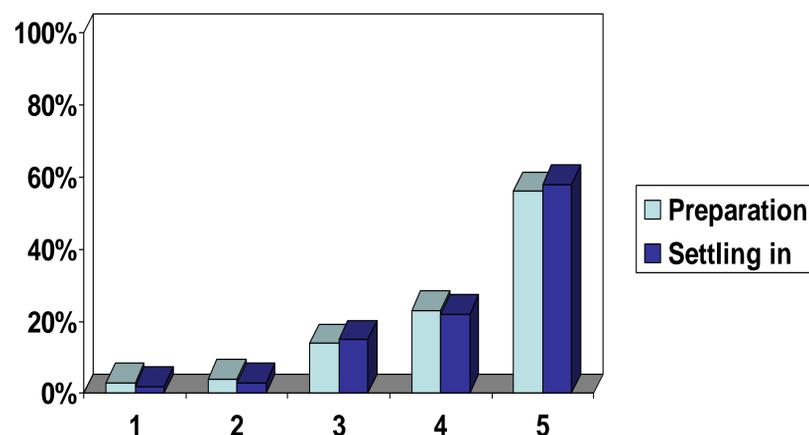
In preparation for transfer

- 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

Rating of transfer experience



Rating of preparation for transfer

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

Rating of settling into new hospital

- The welcome you received at the new unit
- The induction you received at the new unit as to where everything was, seeing the doctors, how your baby will be cared for
- Your knowledge of how much the new unit knew about your baby and the care he/she had been receiving at the other unit
- How the new staff helped you with the changes and differences you were experiencing
- Openness of the new neonatal unit staff to answering your questions
- The communication between you and the new neonatal unit staff
- The amount of trust you had in the new neonatal unit staff to care for you and your baby
- Communication between the maternity unit and neonatal unit staff about your baby's condition

Strengths

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

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

Challenges

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