

Family Integrated Care on the neonatal unit

Aims

To implement a Family Integrated Care model on a 22-bedded neonatal unit (NNU). Prompted by the work at the neonatal unit in Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto.

Rationale

It is strongly supported that parents should be at the centre of the child's care. However, within neonatal care, health professionals have assumed total care of the baby, whilst parents are passive and often feeling like onlookers in their baby's care.

In considering the evidence supporting the UNICEF Baby Friendly Standards and the Bliss Family Friendly audit tool, the Family Integrated Care project looked to address this.

Development

Using a multi-disciplinary team approach, a staff education team was put in place to support and enable staff to move from prime care giver to 'parental coach'. A formal parental package was developed. This provided explicit guidance for staff and parent responsibilities, one-to-one parent education and competency assessments.

Formal teaching sessions were and still are delivered 5 days a week, from a multi-professional team. Developmental and kangaroo care was promoted. Parents were supported in learning traditional nursing skills to care for their baby e.g. taking temperatures, giving medication, weighing and recording feeds. In order to facilitate them in becoming confident and fully involved in their baby's care, parents were asked to commit to spending at least 6 hours a day on the NNU.

Challenges

This was not only a change in practice, but a change in culture. Staff engagement was challenging.

Introducing new paperwork and difficulties releasing staff for training added to this. Staff raised concerns over 'allowing' parents to be more involved in caring for their baby, how that altered the way they practised and how that affected professional registration.

Outcomes

Early data suggests that the approach led to

Top tips for providers & commissioners



Preparation is the key - ensure you have a firm foundation to the project and a multi-disciplinary approach.

Give staff time to talk about their concerns.

Celebrate your achievements - it's too easy to criticise your failings.

improved breastfeeding rates at discharge and reduced length of stay as well as reduced parental anxiety following discharge. Staff satisfaction has increased.

Contact

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New cards that made the final cut include co-sleeping, 'negative stories', [#familyintegratedcare](#), reconfiguration... [#MatExp](#) [#NobodysPatient](#)

