

Our ref: FOI 3661

31st March 2026

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

For hospitals providing neonatal or SCBU services, please could you provide the following:

- 1. Confirmation of whether Family Integrated Care (FICare) is currently implemented in your neonatal unit(s), and if so, the date of initial implementation.**

Response:

Family Integrated Care (FICare) is currently implemented within neonatal services in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, including Craigavon Area Hospital Neonatal Unit and Daisy Hill Hospital Special Care Baby Unit.

Date of implementation: September 2021

- 2. Copies of any internal policies, protocols, or guidance documents relating to FICare.**

Response:

There is no single policy titled “Family Integrated Care (FICare)”. FICare is an approach or model to family integrated care made up of a variety of processes and practices involving the family unit.

The following clinical guidance supports parental involvement in neonatal care which supports the FICare model:

Breastfeeding Policy

Skin-to-Skin (Kangaroo Care) guidance

PERIPrem pathway, which promotes early skin-to-skin contact and delivery room cuddles for infants born at less than 34 weeks’ gestation where clinically appropriate

Visiting

Supporting Documents:

Please see attached.

3. Details of any staff training programmes or materials used to support FICare delivery.

Response:

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust support the delivery of Family Integrated Care (FICare) within neonatal services through a range of staff education programmes, professional development opportunities and clinical teaching sessions. These include:

Family and Infant Neurodevelopmental Education (FINE) Programme

The FINE programme focuses on:

- infant neurodevelopment
- understanding infant behavioural cues
- supporting parent–infant relationships
- the parental experience and journey through neonatal care
- promoting neuroprotective and family integrated approaches to care

Neonatal Learning and Education Programme (NELP)

The Trust provides a Neonatal Learning and Education Programme (NELP) which delivers weekly multidisciplinary neonatal education sessions for neonatal staff.

These sessions take place every Tuesday from 1pm and are open to the neonatal multidisciplinary team.

Developmental Care Education

Developmental care education is supported through a multidisciplinary developmental care group, which is currently led by Allied Health Professionals within the neonatal service.

Education is delivered through both formal teaching sessions and bedside clinical support for staff.

Regional Education and Network Collaboration

Staff within the Trust also participate in education delivered through the Neonatal Network of Northern Ireland, which provides regional guidance and supports the implementation of Family Integrated Care across neonatal units in Northern Ireland.

Patient and Public Involvement and Parent Engagement

The Trust has an established Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Parent Engagement Group, which includes parent representatives from both Craigavon Area Hospital Neonatal Unit and Daisy Hill Hospital Special Care Baby Unit.

4. Details of any staff training programmes or materials used to support FICare delivery relating to older siblings.

Response:

There is no specific training programme relating to older siblings; however, the principles of supporting siblings and the wider family unit are incorporated within the Trust's family-centred and Family Integrated Care (FICare) approach which the Southern Trust supports and is committed to: programmes as detailed in previous point no.3.

5. Any audit reports, evaluations, or outcome data relating to the effectiveness or impact of FICare on neonatal care or family experience.

Response:

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust do not hold a specific standalone audit or evaluation report labelled as an assessment of Family Integrated Care (FICare) within neonatal services. However, the Trust gathers information relating to parental experience and engagement within neonatal care through a number of mechanisms.

Care Opinion feedback

Regional Neonatal Network Discharge Questionnaire

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

Comments received from families on discharge

6. If FICare is not currently implemented, please indicate whether there are plans or discussions underway to introduce it.**Response:**

N/A

In addition (and if relevant), please could the hospital provide information on its policies or regulations regarding parental and sibling access to babies receiving neonatal care:

1. Are both parents and siblings permitted to spend time with babies in neonatal care units?**Response:**

Yes: Within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust neonatal units, a family integrated approach to care and visiting is promoted. Sibling visits are facilitated by neonatal staff and parents to help siblings understand the neonatal environment and maintain family connections during the baby's hospital admission. Additional supports are available to assist sibling engagement, including child-friendly resources such as colouring activities, where siblings are encouraged to create drawings and messages about their baby's journey. These can be displayed around the infant's cot space to support family connection and involvement. Where families are unable to attend the neonatal unit in person, virtual access using neonatal unit tablet devices may also be arranged to support family interaction and connection.

2. Are there any time restrictions or limitations on how long parents or siblings may spend with babies in neonatal care?**Response:**

The neonatal units operate an open access approach for parents, meaning parents are able to spend time with their baby 24 hours a day, seven days a week, subject to clinical circumstances and infection prevention and control guidance.

Sibling visits are facilitated with support from parents and neonatal staff and may be subject to local infection prevention guidance or clinical considerations to ensure the safety of babies receiving neonatal care.

3. Does the hospital have any policies or practices to ensure that babies from multiple births (e.g. twins, triplets) receive equal parental contact time compared to singleton babies?

Response:

There is no specific policy relating to parental contact time for babies from multiple births compared to singleton babies.

The same information provided in no 1 & 2 applies to this query.

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