

Website and app to support parents of preterm infants

Preterm infants, i.e. those born earlier than expected are at increased risk of ill health and frequently have poor nutrition, growth and development. Parenting a preterm infant can be very stressful. Preterm infants often spend long periods in the hospital and even after the medical crises have passed, and the infant is discharged home, parents may continue to experience distress as they attempt to care for their fragile infant whose development and behaviour may be different to term-born infants. Good nutrition is a key concern for parents. Our work with the parent-partnership focus groups revealed that families of preterm infants would benefit from support in this area.

Weaning is the process by which babies start taking foods other than breast or infant formula milk. This time can be very stressful for parents of preterm infants. It is difficult for parents to decide when the baby is ready to be weaned and there is a lack of information about what would be the correct method and food to use while weaning. We would like to design a website to provide information about nutrition and weaning in preterm infants. This site will include information on how to identify when the child is ready to be weaned, culturally acceptable food items that can be used, how to feed infants, and other information about nutrition after weaning.

The website should be also available via an app which may be downloadable on a range of smartphones.

Currently there are some leaflets that provide information about how to wean preterm infants. The most frequently used is available at <https://www.cshsurrey.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/services/Weaning%20preterm.pdf>

We would like to create a website with this information and investigate if giving parents information through a website and an app may be more useful than giving out leaflets.

For the website: we would like to have a platform that has text and pictures, videos as well as the option for parents to share their experiences. The materials will be provided by the Neonatal Team at the Queen's Medical Centre.