

# Psychological support for parents on the neonatal unit at the Royal Free Hospital

## Information for parents and guardians



### **Why is psychological support important?**

Having a baby in hospital can be difficult especially if your baby is ill or premature. You may be trying to recover from a frightening or traumatic delivery and find yourself having to cope with a very vulnerable baby who cannot yet go home. Talking about these experiences can benefit you and your baby's recovery.

You may have concerns about your baby's health and development and how you are getting to know each other in the confines of the unit. You may feel exhausted but rest or sleep may not come very easily and you may find it hard to concentrate. Parents often describe feeling positive one moment and down the next. It can be a lonely time, even when you are surrounded by lots of different people and activity going on around you. It is not only mothers who can feel like this – fathers do too, as do other children in the family.

Someone to talk to who is not involved with the medical care of the baby can be helpful to you, your baby and other members of your family. Child psychotherapists who work with parents are part of the neonatal unit team.

We can offer support to help cope with the emotional aspects of your baby's stay in hospital. If you are concerned about your other children, you may wish to talk to one of us about how to we can support and help them during this time.

## Who are we?

Child and adolescent psychotherapists at the Royal Free Hospital offer informal, flexible psychological support to parents whose baby is receiving specialist care on the neonatal unit. Child and adolescent psychotherapists are experienced in working with parents in stressful circumstances and can support with any concerns parents may have.

## How do we work?

Our approach is flexible and informal, to fit the changing circumstances of each parent and baby. We can see you on your own, with your partner or someone else at the cot side or somewhere else on the unit if you would like more privacy. We visit the neonatal unit to meet informally with parents regularly, but we are also happy to meet with you by appointment. We can discuss together whether you have any questions or concerns about the confidentiality of our conversations.

## Contact us

If you wish to make an appointment please ask one of the nurses to let us know. You can also contact us by phone below. Please let the team know you are calling about the neonatal unit. In some cases, you may find it helpful to have support after you and your baby have been discharged from the unit. If you think this would be beneficial to you, you can discuss this with the psychotherapist or with any of the nurses caring for your baby.

## Our child and adolescent psychotherapists include:

- Alison Cantle
- Flavia Ansaldo
- Aliko Pendas



## Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

Phone: 020 7830 2931

CAMHS extension: 35819

## More information

For more information about our neonatal services, please visit:

[www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/childrens-services/neonatal-units](http://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/childrens-services/neonatal-units)

## Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references, please email:

[rf.communications@nhs.net](mailto:rf.communications@nhs.net).

## Alternative formats

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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