



Update on Neonatal Services

Northern Neonatal Network

NHS England - Specialised Commissioning, North East and
North Cumbria

Today

- Introductions
- Overview of Neonatal Care
- Update on 2015 Royal College review
- Implementation of final recommendation (26 week pathway)
- Impact for patients and families
- Summary and next steps

Introductions

- Dr Sundeep Harigopal, Clinical Lead of Northern Neonatal Network and Consultant Neonatologist at Newcastle Hospitals
- Dr Imran Ahmed Consultant Neonatologist at Sunderland Royal Hospital
- Julie Turner, Head of Specialised Commissioning North East and North Cumbria, NHS England
- Yasmin Sultana Khan, Service Specialist, Specialised Commissioning, North East and North Cumbria, NHS England

Overview of Neonatal Care

Northern Neonatal Network

Neonatal
Intensive Care
Units
(NICU)



- Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) Newcastle
- **Sunderland Royal Hospital**
- James Cook Hospital, Middlesbrough

Local Neonatal
Units
(LNU)



None

Special Care Baby
Units (SCBU)



- NSECH, Cramlington
- Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Gateshead
- University Hospital of North Durham
- Darlington Memorial Hospital
- University Hospital of North Tees, Stockton
- Cumberland Infirmary, Carlisle
- West Cumberland Hospital, Whitehaven

This is what we are here to
talk about today



Update on 2015 Royal College review

- In 2015 the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) reviewed neonatal services across the region.
- Five recommendations were made and most are now complete.
- This included:
 - merger of both neonatal intensive care units in Teesside to create one NICU at James Cook and one SCBU at North Tees.
 - the development of a dedicated neonatal transport service (NNETs) to coordinate the movement of babies around the region.
 - the expansion of capacity at the RVI which is currently underway and ongoing.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee members may recall previous engagement regarding this review in 2018.
- COVID-19 slowed down progress of the final recommendation which is still outstanding. This relates to changes at the NICU at Sunderland Royal Hospital

RCPCH 2015 summary of recommendations

Recommendation	Status
Re-designation of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at North Tees to a Special Care Units (SCU)	Complete
Increased capacity at South Tees to cater for the re-designation at North Tees	Complete
Development of a dedicated standalone neonatal transport service for the Northern Neonatal Network	Complete
Expansion of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle	Complete 4 Cots increased in 2018, a further 4 cots to be mobilised by July 2023
Changes to service provision in Neonatal Intensive Care in Sunderland (part of South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS FT)	In progress

What change is needed in Sunderland?

- At the moment, all three NICUs (Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough) look after babies from 22 weeks gestation
- The Royal College review recommends that the NICU in Sunderland looks after babies from 26 weeks gestation
- This means:
 - any babies born **below** 26 weeks gestation from across the region would be looked after in Newcastle and Middlesbrough
 - any babies born **from** 26 weeks gestation from the areas listed below will be looked after in Sunderland.
 - Carlisle
 - Durham
 - Gateshead
 - Northumbria (NSECH)

Why is this important?

- Sunderland is currently the smallest NICU in the whole country due to its low volume of activity.
- This means it currently does not meet important clinical standards on the volume of activity required for a neonatal intensive care unit to look after extremely small babies.
- There is good evidence that units with higher activity have better outcomes.
- Ultimately, this change will ensure the highest quality of care for extremely small babies across the region
- Although the Sunderland NICU will no longer provide intensive care of babies between 22-26 weeks gestation, the change will result in overall increase in activity. This is because more babies from 26 week gestation will be cared for in Sunderland.

Where will pre-term babies be looked after?

The table below shows where babies born from 22 to 26 weeks will be looked after:

Northern Neonatal Network – NICU level 1 units		
Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle	Sunderland Royal Hospital	James Cook Hospital, Middlesbrough
All Newcastle babies	South Tyneside and Sunderland babies above 26 weeks	All Middlesbrough babies
Northumbria babies below 26 weeks	Northumbria babies above 26 weeks *	All North Tees babies *
South Tyneside and Sunderland babies below 26 weeks	Gateshead babies above 26 weeks *	All Darlington babies *
Carlisle babies below 26 weeks	Durham babies above 26 weeks *	All Whitehaven babies *
All surgical babies across the Northern Neonatal Network	Carlisle babies above 26 weeks	

* Any babies born at 30 weeks and over will be cared for in their local SCBU

Indicates changes in patient flow due to the 26 week pathway change

What is the impact for families of very small pre-term babies?

Now

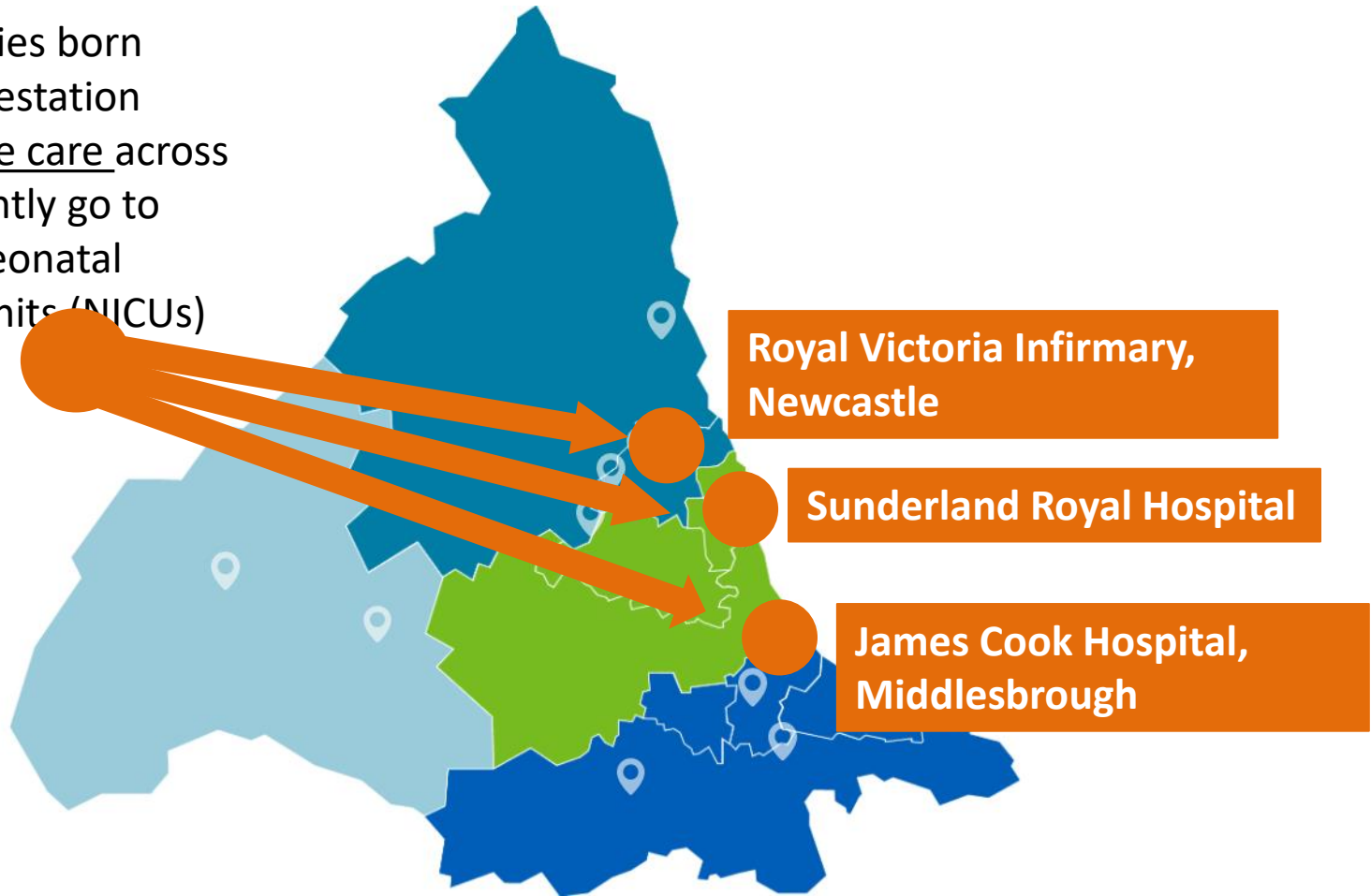
- All babies born from 22 weeks gestation are currently cared for in either Newcastle, Sunderland or Middlesbrough
- This means families from across the region already travel for this highly specialist care

After the 26 week pathway change

- Families will still need to travel to one of these three units, however, Sunderland will become the designated unit for 26 week babies from Durham, Carlisle, Gateshead and Northumbria
- All pre-term Newcastle and Middlesbrough babies will still be cared for locally.

Current patient flows

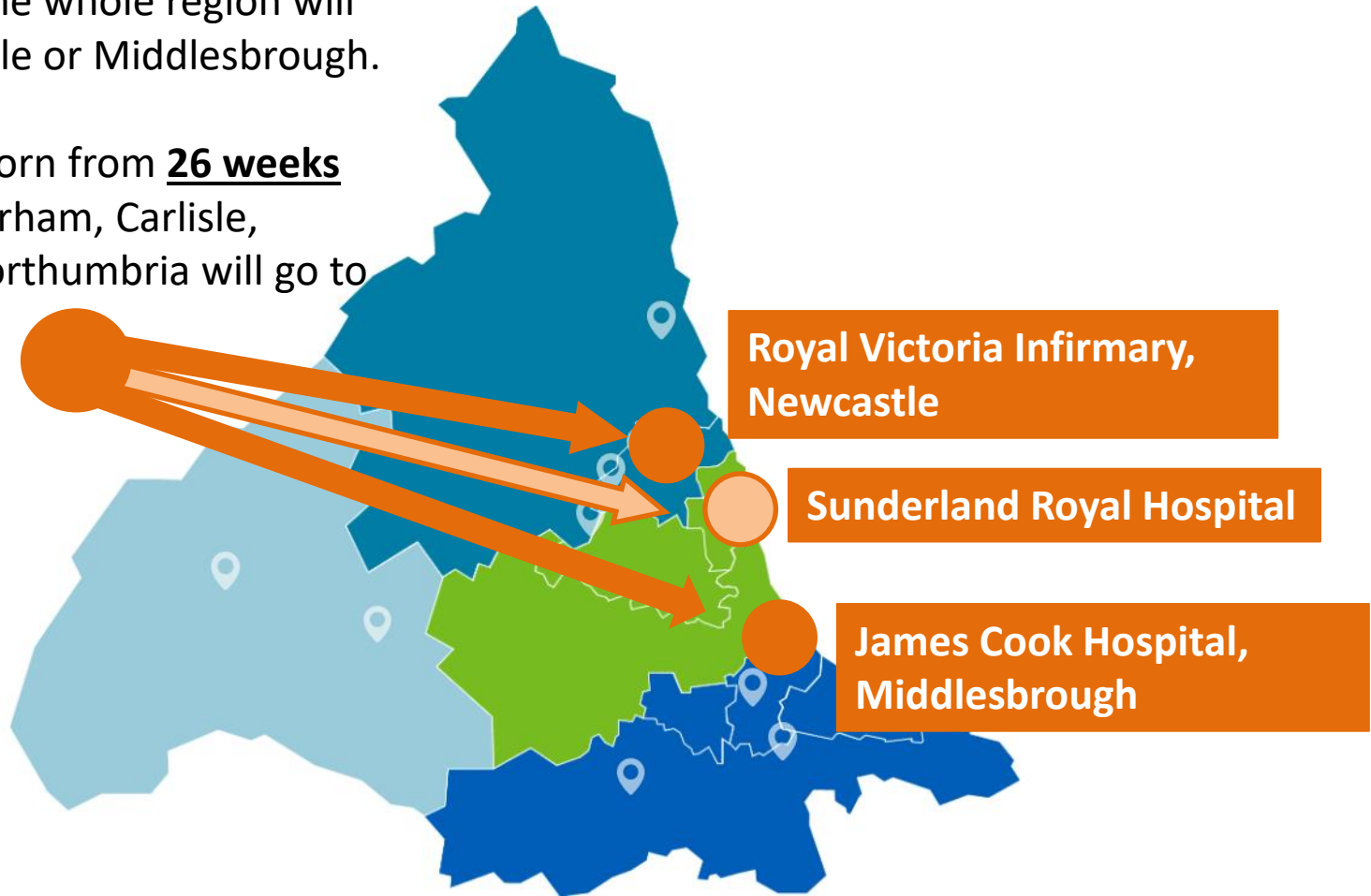
All pre-term babies born from 22 weeks gestation needing intensive care across the region currently go to one our three Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs)



Patient flow after 26 week pathway change

Pre-term babies born from **22 weeks** gestation across the whole region will still go to Newcastle or Middlesbrough.

Pre-term babies born from **26 weeks** gestation from Durham, Carlisle, Gateshead and Northumbria will go to Sunderland



Activity in numbers

- Our neonatal intensive care units in the region look after approximately 1648 baby admissions every year.
- Of these 984 admissions are for pre-term babies (less than 37 weeks)
- Of the total number of babies born less than 26 weeks:
 - Newcastle looked after 128 admissions over 3 years
 - Middlesbrough looked after 97 admissions over 3 years
 - Sunderland looked after 37 admissions over 3 years
- In one year, of the 12 Sunderland admissions, five were Sunderland ‘booked’ mothers.
- We expect the main impact of this 26 week pathway change will be for families in South Tyneside and Sunderland who would usually have gone to Sunderland Royal Hospital if their baby was born between 22-25 weeks gestation.
- This will affect approximately five families a year from Sunderland who will now go to Newcastle or Middlesbrough.

Information taken from data provided by the Northern Neonatal Network over a three year average between 2019-2022

Patient involvement

- Task and finish group in place which includes:
 - patient reps from across the region through a Parent Advisory Group
 - Care Co-ordinators from the Neonatal Network who have very close relationships with families
- Key themes from discussions to date have focussed on clearer communication for families accessing neonatal services, specifically in relation to support services that might be available.
- Further focus groups are being held with families that have recently used neonatal services to review and update patient information that is provided to families.

Feedback from families so far

'Parents need to understand the reasons why they are being sent where they are being sent'

'There is only a small number impact, but what about the financial impact for these families'

'There is a need to consider the mental health impact for Mums who are accessing neonatal services'

'There is a need for support travelling to a non-local neonatal unit – more information should be made available about this.'

Commissioner and wider stakeholder support

The change to the 26 week pathway is fully supported by all system partners:

- Northern Neonatal Network and NHS Foundation Trust members
- The North East and North Cumbria Local Maternity and Neonatal System
- South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
- NHS England (North East and Yorkshire region)
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (via its Joint Committee arrangements with Specialised Commissioning)

Summary

- The Northern Neonatal Network seeks support to progress with implementation of the 26 week pathway change. This is planned to take place on 1 August 2023
- This is the last recommendation from the 2015 Royal College review and seeks to make sure the best quality of care can be provided for pre-term babies across the region
- Further involvement and engagement with patients will take place over the summer as transition to the new pathway.
- Although the impact is small in terms of numbers, the impact of the change and on patient experience will be monitored closely

Next steps for neonatal care

- Since the Royal College review in 2015, a further national report has been published in 2019 called the Neonatal Critical Care Review (NCCR).
- This aims to facilitate the transformation of Neonatal Critical Care services even further by 2025 by:
 - *Aligning capacity*
 - *Developing the expert neonatal workforce*
 - *Enhancing the experience of families*
- Significant work has taken place for ‘developing the workforce’ theme including funding for neonatal nurses, allied health professionals and neonatal quality roles.
- For the ‘enhancing the experience of families’ theme, The Northern Neonatal Network established the first neonatal care coordination team in the UK in April 2021.
- No work has taken place in the region on the ‘aligning capacity’ theme yet. This is because we need to complete the recommendations from the 2015 Royal College review first. This will, however, help us towards meeting the NCCR ambition to ‘align capacity’ and importantly work towards meeting standards that improve the survival outcome for the baby.
- We would welcome the opportunity to come back to scrutiny once we understand more about the NCCR and what this means for the region.



Thank you and questions