



Parents' guide to helping reduce noise in Buscot nurseries

Buscot Neonatal Unit

This leaflet is for parents and carers of babies in the nurseries on Buscot and outlines why it is important to protect your baby's hearing.

Why is it important to reduce the noise?

In the womb the baby is protected from noise by the amniotic fluid that surrounds them as well as the mother's abdominal wall. The abdominal wall thins as the baby grows, allowing gradual exposure to louder noise from outside.

Neonatal units can be very noisy places with alarms, monitors, doors, bins, objects falling off incubators, as well as the constant every day ward sounds.

When premature babies are exposed to loud, unexpected noises it can cause stress and affect them by:

- Increasing their heart rate, blood pressure and breathing.
- Using up energy they need for growth.
- Causing hearing loss by affecting development of the cochlear.
- Disturbing their sleep.
- Causing a delay in speech and language development.
- Impairing their neurological (nerve) development.
- Impairing their auditory perception – they may be unable to distinguish their parents' voices and noises will be distorted.
- Making it hard for your baby to hear and enjoy pleasant noises, such as your voice.



What can be done to reduce the noise on Buscot?

Staff will aim to:

- Respond to alarms, phones and door buzzers quickly.
- Keep alarm volumes on all devices as low as possible (when safe to do so).
- Avoid opening packages inside the incubator.
- Lower their voices during ward rounds and handovers and when administering medication or procedures.
- Encourage quiet hour after lunch around 2pm with lights dimmed, noise kept to a minimum, routine procedures delayed, no cleaning and asking parents to prepare for cuddles 15 minutes before quiet time.



Parents, carers and visitors should aim to:

- Be aware of noises and keep voices low, especially when near the cot space.
- Use covers over incubators.
- Take care when opening and closing incubator drawers and portholes.
- Open and close bins with care.
- Avoid placing objects on top of incubators.

Making the right noises

However, complete silence is not golden for our pre-term infants. Your baby's auditory (hearing) system needs stimulation to develop normally. Repetitive exposure to common sounds such as singing, or voice recognition is essential for language and speech development. So....

Please do:

- Speak gently to your baby and remember to open incubator portholes to prevent noise distortion.
- Read a story.
- Sing.
- Use a soothing voice.
- Play lullabies.
- During quiet hour, make a special effort to keep noise down.
- Please alert a member of staff if you feel the nursery is too noisy.



References:

Guidelines for Consideration of Noise on the Neonatal Unit, V5, June 2019. TV & W Governance group

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust Policy on Guideline framework for consideration of noise 2020

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Graven S & Browne J (2008) Auditory development in the fetus & Infant, Newborn & Infant Nursing reviews 8(4):187-193

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