



The Salisbury District Hospital Stars Appeal's latest project aims to provide a much needed Family Accommodation Unit for the parents and siblings of babies born prematurely or critically ill.

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (sometimes called the Special Care Baby Unit) at Salisbury District Hospital provides intensive and special care to babies born prematurely or critically ill. Around 300 babies each year (about 1 in 10 of all babies born at the Hospital) need to spend time on NICU before they are well enough for their parents to take them home. Many of these babies have been born up to three months early, weighing less than 2lbs. Families using Salisbury NICU predominantly come from South Wiltshire, West Hampshire and North and East Dorset.

The Need for Dedicated Family Accommodation

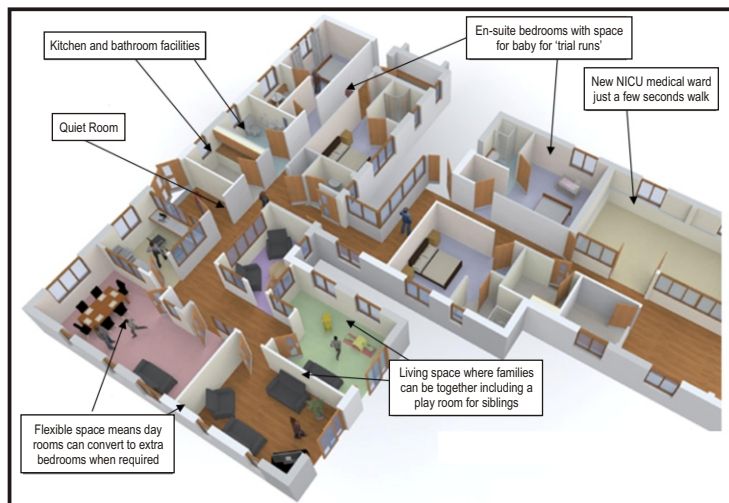
Babies often need to stay on NICU for several weeks or months before being well enough to go home. This is obviously a very distressing time for mums and dads. Existing parents' facilities consist of one small day room. There is no overnight accommodation. This means that:

- New mums and dads have to face the pressure and expense of daily commuting from their homes, up to 30 miles away, to visit their newborn child.
- There are no facilities for siblings, making it difficult for parents who already have children to spend long periods with their new baby and to be together as a family.
- There is a lack of 'private' space where parents can spend time with their babies or talk things through with one another or their baby's doctor or nurse.

All of the above significantly limits the amount of time parents are able to spend with their new babies.

About the proposed NICU Family Unit and how it will make a difference

The NICU Family Unit will be a lifeline for local families at a tremendously difficult time. It will have en-suite bedrooms, a lounge, kitchen, a play room for siblings and educational facilities, enabling parents whose babies have special needs to learn treatment techniques.



Kira and Rebekah



The Stars Appeal will help fund accommodation for the families of babies like Kira and Rebekah, who were born 3 months early weighing just over 2lbs. They had to spend more than two months in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Salisbury District Hospital before their parents could take them home.

The Unit will offer accommodation for up to four families at any one time. It will mean:

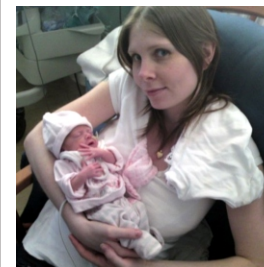
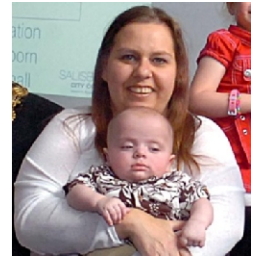
- Parents will be able to stay just a few seconds from their newborn baby.
- No long, stressful and expensive daily commutes to and from the Hospital.
- More time with baby helping to establish bonding and effective feeding routines.
- Families can spend quality time together away from the NICU medical ward.
- Parents nervous about returning home will have the opportunity to stay with their baby in the NICU Family Unit for a few nights before returning home.

Above all, the NICU Family Unit will enable parents to spend significantly more and better quality time with their babies - a key factor in increasing babies' wellbeing, shortening babies' hospital stays and allowing families to return home together sooner.

Mum's point of view

"The new family unit is an amazing idea, it means that families won't have to go through what we went through. You have enough to think about when your child is born prematurely or ill. You don't want to be worrying about getting to see them or how long you can spend with them."

Nicola Crawford and baby Kristian - born eight weeks early. Spent just under four weeks in Salisbury NICU before being well enough to go home. From Amesbury (20 mile round trip to Hospital).



"A family unit would be truly wonderful. It will help parents spend more time with their babies and bond with them. If your baby is having a not-so-good day, you want to be able to stay with them, not leave them at night. To have rooms where parents can stay would reduce the stress and worry of leaving your baby and it will be a great comfort to baby knowing that mummy and daddy are right there for them."

Fiona Cooke and baby Aimee - born 14 weeks early. Spent 11 weeks in Salisbury NICU before being well enough to go home. From Warminster (50 mile round trip to Hospital).

About the Stars Appeal

The Stars Appeal is Salisbury District Hospital's Charity. It raises money to create the best possible experience for 300,000 local people that rely on the Hospital every year.

The Appeal funds extra facilities, equipment and enhancements in patient care throughout all wards and departments. It helps the Hospital reach standards above and beyond those possible with normal NHS funding. We also undertake major campaigns to make a big difference to patients in key areas such as cancer, cardiac care and the care of children and babies.

All departments are grateful for support and we will ensure your wishes are respected if you would like to direct your support towards a particular area of the Hospital's work.

"The family unit that the Stars Appeal aims to fund will be a godsend. It will provide much-needed accommodation and support for families with babies spending weeks or months on NICU, making a very difficult situation more bearable. It will mean that these families can be together more when they need each other most, starting out as families should."

Emer Hopkins and baby Dara - born five weeks early. Spent two weeks in Salisbury NICU before being well enough to go home. From Devizes (56 mile round trip to Hospital).



To find out more about the Stars Appeal call the office on 01722 429005, visit the website at www.starsappeal.org or email info@starsappeal.org