

Building a brighter and better future

The neonatal unit at Princess Anne Hospital, Southampton, is a combined medical and surgical unit and one of two lead centres for the Central South Coast Neonatal Network (CSCNN). The unit provides a range of tertiary services including interventional fetal medicine, neonatal surgery, cardiology, nephrology and neurosurgery.

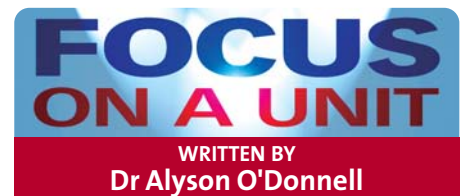
Following the institution of the CSCNN in 2003, a lack of intensive care capacity in Southampton was identified as a major block to network development and funding was made available for an expansion project to add eight intensive care/high dependency cots. Work began in November 2005 to reconfigure existing clinical areas with a staged redevelopment of non-clinical areas to provide extra space. The work was completed in December 2006 with remarkably little disruption to the functioning of the unit. The unit now provides 20 intensive care/high dependency cots and 16 special care cots.

Throughout the redevelopment process the design team were determined to move from the previously bland clinical environment to a child and family friendly area. The colourful scheme is based on the

childrens' board game Snakes and Ladders, to reflect the babies' course through their stay, with a primary coloured snake winding its way through the unit floor and 'ladder windows' into the clinical rooms. The end result is a vibrant scheme which has attracted nothing but praise from families and visitors. Charitable donations allowed substantial improvements to be made to parent accommodation, ensuring better patient care and a more positive experience for families.

Staff members are enjoying a great improvement in the working environment with larger and well-equipped cot spaces. Individual lighting and more spacious rooms have also reduced noise and light levels, contributing to a calmer ambience. There are now four large clinical areas and two isolation rooms for flexible provision of intensive/high dependency care.

The dimensions of the new unit have



called for innovations in staffing with more than twenty additional nurses being recruited. The 16-bed special care section is separate from the main intensive care area and is led by dedicated senior nursing staff who support parents and facilitate discharge planning. The unit has long supported the expanded role of the bedside nurse in providing holistic care and this role is increasing, with a desire to have fully nurse-led special care once current staff have completed prescribing and examination modules.

Southampton is one of 11 breast milk banks in the UK. In 2006, the bank processed more than 800 litres of breast milk from 81 donors. Donors come from a variety of sources – some mothers who have passed through the unit and other well-established breastfeeding women from around the region. All women are fully screened for infection and, following pasteurisation, the milk undergoes stringent quality control testing. The volumes generated are sufficient to ensure that the smallest and sickest babies can receive breast milk within Southampton and the wider region.

Consultant Neonatologist Alyson O'Donnell reports: "The development of the unit represents a huge advance in our ability to offer top quality local care for the sickest and most fragile babies from the south coast. We now have sufficient capacity to meet the needs of our local population and the wider network – we haven't refused an intensive care admission since the cots opened. The atmosphere in the unit is really positive with all staff members embracing the changes. These improvements to the working environment cannot be underestimated."

Lisa Leppard, family care sister, adds: "The refurbishment of support facilities has had a very positive impact on how our families cope during stressful times. We hope to keep building on the good work that has already been done to develop facilities further and allow more parents to stay close to their babies on the unit."



The new SCBU (right) waiting to be occupied and (below) Sister Mandy Edwards at work.

Is your unit special?

Why not contribute to our focus on a unit feature?
Contact kate@infantgrapevine.co.uk