

Promoting Siblinghood in the Neonatal Unit

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Neonatal Nursing
Preceptorship
Programme

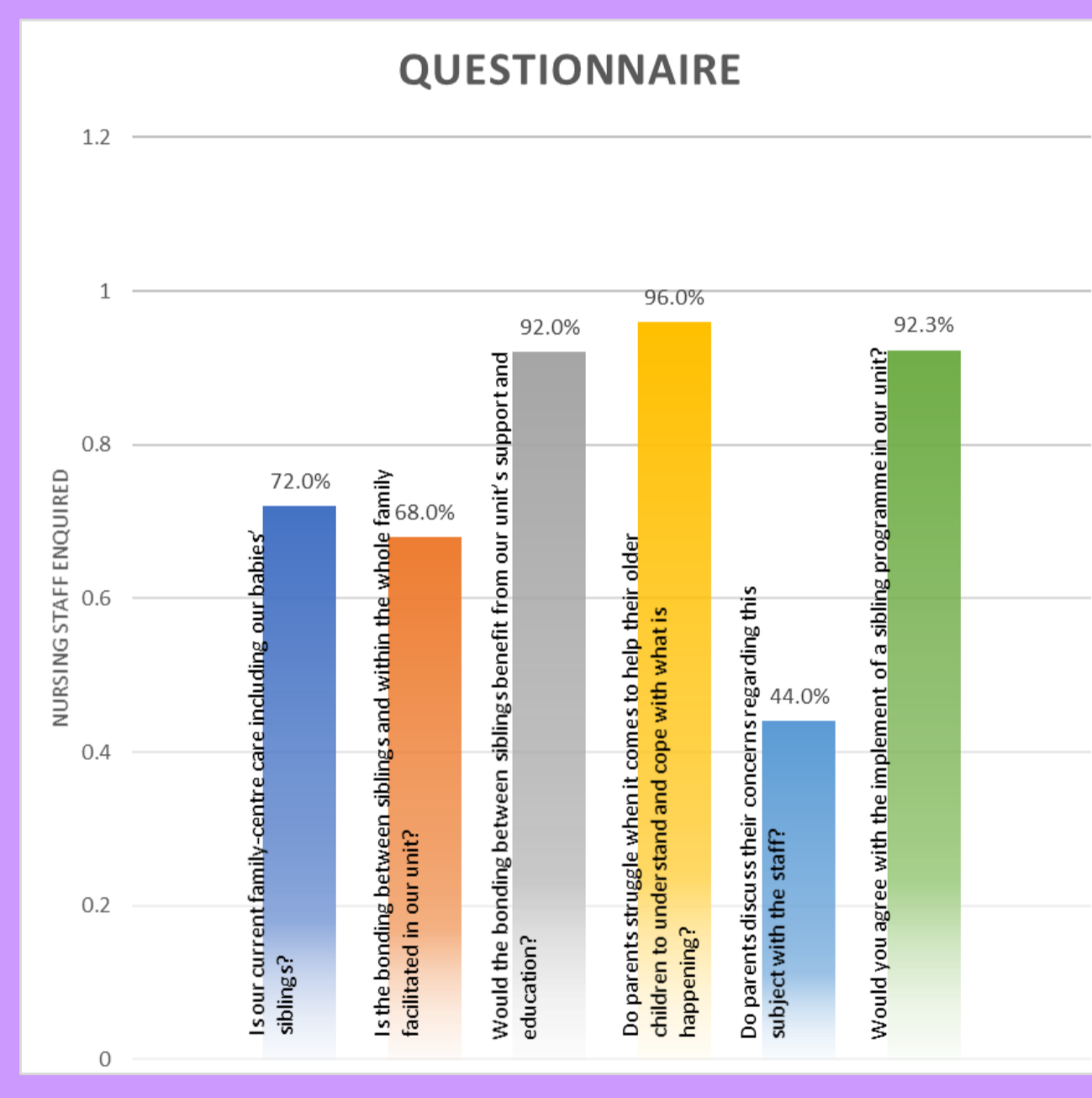
Aim

To strengthen family functioning and bonding by involving and educating siblings in the family experience of the hospitalization of a premature or sick baby and therefore to promote family-centred care.



Method

Staff were asked to identify what they perceived would help improve the experience for siblings on this neonatal unit and their view on this subject. An anonymous questionnaire was delivered to 30 of the nursing staff in the neonatal unit.



Introducing the change

Their views were sought on the refurbishment of the family room to incorporate a designed sibling area.

The family room has been refurbished and it is now siblings friendly, where there is room for toys, NICU related puzzles and bookcases with children's illustrated and NICU themed books, funded by Bibs (Buscot ward charity organization), which parents can use also by the incubators/cots.

A parents' leaflet was devised, presented to the parents' panel and it is in the unit. It intends to assist them in their difficult job of dealing and explaining the unexpected situation to the baby's siblings in order to reduce the negative impact of the experience in that child's life.

Background

There are a lack of studies or reflections made on this subject in the UK, mainly for the last few years.

However, siblings often experience strong emotions and reactions in response to this situational crisis, requiring support in the adjustment to the associated changes (Munch and Levick, 2001).

In the UK, there are no organised sibling support programmes. Parents often struggle to manage supporting their older children in addition to coping with having a sick and/or premature new born. During visiting time siblings often become restless and upset with nothing to do and no explanations that they are able to understand as to what is happening and why (Wainwright, 2013).

Staff suggestions to increase the positive/educative experiences of the siblings whilst visiting and bonding:

- **Story books/ Information related to the situation for the siblings**
 - **Playroom/siblings dedicated area**
 - **Welcome packs**
 - **Colouring and activity NICU related books**
 - **Leaflet for parents**
- **Staying in the flat with parents and neonate**
 - **Include them in cuddles and cares**



References:

Wainwright, Lynne 2013/42. Supporting children with newborn siblings in a neonatal care unit: learning from support programmes in units in the U.S.A.. Available from: <http://www.florence-nightingale-foundation.org.uk/content/page/237/>

Munch, Shari; Levick, Judy. "I'm special, too": Promoting sibling adjustment in the neonatal intensive care unit. Health and Social work; Feb 2001; 26, 1; Hospital premium Collection pg. 58