

## Investigation into Practices around the Transition from Non Oral to Oral Feeding for Preterm Infants across Two English Neonatal Networks

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### Abstract

**Methods:** The study used a questionnaire to ask about practices, policies, resources and views (related to preterm infants commencing oral feeding) across two neonatal networks in England. The issue of transition to oral feeding is of particular significance to preterm infants. It impacts on their progress in neonatal units, their successful discharge home and their feeding issues into childhood. The clinical staffs in the neonatal units in the two networks were the population selected for the sample, and a mixture of quota and convenience sampling produced a 100% return, with one or more individuals responding from each unit.

**Results:** This is still in its early stages, but shows a range in the perceived importance of early oral feeding experiences, variability in criteria for initiating oral feeding, infrequent presence of protocols or guidelines related to infant feeding and variability in staff access to training from fairly comprehensive to very minimal. Specialised staff and physical resources available to support feeding vary considerably from neonatal unit to neonatal unit with a pattern of higher intensity units being better resourced. Approaches to breast, bottle and cup feeding vary with a split between units which do or do not cup feed infants. Consideration of pa-rental views in feeding also varied.

**Conclusions:** Data collection will be completed and analysed by November 2015. Findings will be reviewed in the context of potential for future research and implications for practice change in how the transition to oral feeding for preterm infants is approached.

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