

East of England Neonatal Benchmarking Group

Benchmark: Nutrition Care Pathway

Score relates to practice in (unit):	
Scored by:	Date scored:
Statement: Early introduction and progression of enteral nutrition are supported by evidence showing that standardised feeding protocols can reduce cumulative nutritional deficits, shorten time to full enteral feeds, reduce duration of parenteral nutrition, and decrease the incidence of NEC. ¹	
Standards: All staff on neonatal units have a responsibility to ensure the Nutrition Care Pathway is implemented according to the guideline	
Patient Group: Any infant who fits the criteria for a nutrition care pathway on the NICU / NNU / SCBU	
Triggers for the development of the benchmark: NEC Care Bundle Essence of Care Improving quality (NSF) Neonatal Toolkit Increasing evidence base Parental /professional concerns	
Criteria for scoring: Review 6 infants and their records/charts who are on the Nutrition Care Pathway. Discuss points with parents/staff where it is not specified that documentation is required.	

Key Factors		Individual scores	Possible total
F1	There is an evidence-based guideline to support clinical practice.		3
F2	Care		8
F3	Staff Education		3
F4	Parent/Carer Education and Involvement		1
	Overall Score		14

Factor 1: There is an evidence-based guideline to support clinical practice.

Evidence based practice guidelines ensure that care delivered to the infant is of the highest standard.

Clinical guidelines are systematically developed statements to assist practitioner and patient decisions about appropriate healthcare for specific circumstances, statements about different aspects of the patients' condition and the care to be given.

Factor 2: Care

Preterm infants have increased nutritional needs due to rapid intrauterine nutrient deposition and early birth. Evidence recommends a tailored nutrient provision, highlighting that these needs cannot be met by volume increase alone and often require human milk fortification or specialist formulas.¹ UNICEF (2022) Baby Friendly Initiative recommends expressing within 1-2 hours of giving birth to help long term production.

Factor 3: Staff Education

All healthcare professionals should be able to ensure neonates nutritional needs are met, and the appropriate documentation to complete.

Factor 4: Parent/Carer Education and Involvement

Parents and carers are educated about their baby's nutritional needs and the benefits of breast milk.