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Neonatal care fund

Easing financial pressures on parents of premature and sick babies.

Parents of premature and sick newborn babies will receive help meeting the additional costs they face as a result of their baby being in hospital with the introduction of a new £1.5 million fund.

From 1 April, the Neonatal Expenses Fund will be available to all parents to support them to spend as much time with their babies as possible, while they are receiving care within a neonatal unit.

The fund will help more than 8,000 families a year with travelling, parking and subsistence costs.

As Health Secretary Shona Robison met new parents at the Simpson's Centre for Reproductive Health at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, she said:

“Having a premature or sick baby is a hugely testing and emotional time for parents. We want to ensure they are supported and involved as possible in decision-making around their baby's care, and have more opportunities to bond as a family during these early days.

“For some parents, getting to and from the hospital every day can be a big additional expense and this is where the Neonatal Expenses Fund can help. Easing the pressure of being able to afford to get to your baby will, I hope, be one less thing for parents in this situation to worry about.”

Dr Sarah Stock, Consultant Obstetrician at NHS Lothian and Senior Clinical Lecturer at MRC Centre for Reproductive Health, University of Edinburgh, said: “We recently launched a specialist service for women who are at higher risk of giving birth before full term.

“We are trying to understand the factors associated with early birth and interventions that might help to prolong pregnancy, so that every baby has the best chance of being born healthy. The clinic – supported by Tommy's, the baby charity – is the first of its kind in Scotland.”

Professor Ben Stenson, Clinical Lead of Neonatal Services in NHS Lothian, said: “We know how vital it is for parents to spend as much time as possible with their babies when they are

being cared for in Neonatal units. It allows them to be involved in the clinical decisions being taken about their care and helps them create a bond with their baby.

“It can be a challenging and emotional time for parents and one that that very often they could not have foreseen or planned ahead for. This fund may help to ease any financial worries and allow them to make the journeys to hospital as often as they would like so they can concentrate on being a new parent.”

Background

The Neonatal Expenses Fund is designed to provide a contribution towards the cost of having a baby within neonatal care.

The Best Start recommended that a national agreed policy should be developed to support parents financially during this difficult time.

Funds are distributed to each NHS Board in Scotland, with all claims being made through each board.

Families will be able to claim for travel costs of 1 return journey, parking and up to £8.50 in subsistence costs per day for the duration of their baby’s stay in the neonatal unit.

One in eight babies born in the UK each year are admitted onto neonatal units.