

Why is there Psychology on PICU?

Having a critically ill child in hospital can affect everyone in the family, including parents/carers, brothers and sisters, grandparents etc.

It can be a stressful, alarming and confusing experience. For all sorts of reasons, parents can experience feelings including:

- | | |
|---------|-------------|
| Anxiety | Guilt |
| Anger | Frustration |

For other children in the family it can be:

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| Frightening | Worrying |
| Confusing | Unsettling |

All of these feelings are normal responses to the stress of having a critically ill child in the family. Coping with them can be exhausting and draining.

Supporting families

We understand that different people cope with stress in different ways, and it is important to respect these differences. When parents/carers can make time to look after themselves, this gives them more strength to look after their children.

Thinking about how you feel and the impact of this on how you cope is important at times of strong emotion.

Support from a psychologist is available to all families in PICU, and it is your choice about how you want to make use of it.

What can we offer?

We try to be flexible with our involvement to suit families. We can offer time to anyone in the family who would like it. We can talk about your child's illness, your experiences and feelings, how to explain things to your other children, or whatever you choose.

We can:

- Talk informally by the bed
- Use the 'quiet rooms' (across the hall)
- Make scheduled times to meet on PICU
- Make scheduled times to meet away from PICU (on the hospital site)



Follow up after PICU

We recognise that for some people, support feels more helpful *after* the PICU admission rather than during it. The move from the intensive PICU environment to the wards and back home can often be stressful and unsettling. It is often not until returning home to normal life that you feel able to reflect on what you have been through. We can provide follow up work after PICU admission. This can include talking on the 'phone, coming back to visit PICU, psychology sessions, or helping you link in to other sources of support near your home. Ongoing support following a bereavement is also available.

If you would like us to contact you after discharge from PICU please fill in this tear-off slip and hand it to your nurse:

Your name.....

Child's name.....

Phone number.....

When, approximately, would you like us to phone?

Alternatively please feel free to contact us in your own time (details on the back)

Confidentiality

We aim to keep what we talk about as private as possible, though there are times when we have to share information. We can talk through confidentiality when we meet.

Our other roles on PICU:

The doctors, nurses and other team members who are involved in your child's care can also be affected by the demanding nature of the work. We work alongside them to promote good psychological understanding on PICU to help them care for you, your child and themselves.

It can be helpful for a psychologist to be part of meetings with your medical team as an independent, non-medical person or advocate, e.g. to help understand medical/technical language; to help other staff see the situation from your point of view etc.



Requesting psychology input:

We spend some time on PICU so if you see us around, let us know if you would like some time to talk.

If we are not around, ask your child's nurse or doctor and they can contact us.

For further information please feel free to contact:

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We are based at:

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Southampton General Hospital
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Psychologists:

Dr Rachel Langley
Sarah Matthews
Dr Anne Beaton
Carolyn West

Rachel (right) is the main psychologist for PICU and the rest of the psychology team are also involved at times

