

Preparing for Home: a before-and-after study to investigate the effects of a neonatal discharge package aimed at increasing parental knowledge, understanding and confidence in caring for their preterm infant before and after discharge from hospital

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

More than 90% of preterm babies now survive. However, parents often have low levels of confidence in their abilities to care for their baby and feel unprepared for discharge, which may lead to increased use of 'out-of-hours' services.

With the help of parents of preterm babies, we developed a 'Train-to-Home' package. This package was aimed at helping the parents of preterm babies to understand and be more involved in the care of their baby while in hospital, and to prepare them for looking after their baby at home.

We studied whether using the Train-to-Home package had any effects on parents' self-confidence and knowledge of how to care for their baby, the babies' length of stay in hospital and the use of 'out-of-hours' services after going home. We compared babies born in the 11-month periods before and after the introduction of the Train-to-Home package in four local neonatal units.

Use of the Train-to-Home package did not affect babies' lengths of hospital stay, or the measured self-confidence scores of parents. However, parents reported feeling more involved and knowledgeable about their babies' care. There was also a small but statistically significant reduction in visits to emergency departments following discharge from hospital after introducing the Train-to-Home package. Despite the limited time available for staff to get used to the Train-to-Home package in this study, the results suggest that this approach may be helpful in informing and empowering parents in the care of their preterm babies after going home from hospital.

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