Aims

Objectives The ‘healing environment’ is a core concept of the developmental care approach which aims to reduce the negative impact of a highly stressful sensory neonatal environment on preterm babies. Despite the daily interactions of support staff in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), little is offered for those working in support roles. Additionally, in-service training is well-recognised as building a sense of shared purpose and instilling feelings of being valued. We aimed to explore the impact of a new educational programme offering developmental care training for non-clinical support staff (housekeepers, ward clerks, and domestic assistants).

Methods The Fostering Improvement of the Neonatal Environment for Support Staff (FINESS) programme was developed and delivered by the neonatal occupational therapist. This involved a one-hour interactive developmental care workshop focussed on light and noise stressors in the NICU environment. The workshop was run twice, a week apart, to facilitate covid safe face to face training. After each workshop, participants were invited to complete a short questionnaire, either independently or dictate their responses to the response coordinator who completed the questionnaire verbatim. Analysis of quantitative responses concentrated on determining the relative frequency of the Likert scale ratings out of 5. All qualitative responses were transcribed and independently analysed by one of the researchers using open coding.

Results Six non-clinical staff participated (3 domestic assistants, a domestic supervisor, a ward clerk and a housekeeper). None of those who participated had previously received any training related to developmental care on the neonatal unit. Ratings of confidence in knowledge improved from mean of 3.67 to 4.83 (rating out of 5) after the workshop. 4 participants strongly agreed (5/5; mean 4.33) that they will change the way they practice following the workshop (figure 1). One respondent noted that she had ‘learnt how my performance would affect babies’ and explained her change would be ‘to open and change bins without noises’.

Following the workshop, 100% of participants reported increased feelings of being valued and appreciation of the importance of their role in looking after sick babies. One respondent explained she felt this way ‘because the neonatal team trained us to make difference in work’. 80% described the workshop as informative and interactive and were keen to receive more ‘training to support other staff to keep babies safe’.

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Conclusion Developmental care training should be offered to all staff working on the neonatal unit across all roles. This is the first study describing the impact of developmental care training for non-clinical support staff on a neonatal unit. Clear benefits in terms of change in practice together with improved sense of belonging and feeling valued as part of the neonatal team are described. A focus group is being organised to gain a deeper understanding of the impact on teamwork and explore other training needs for these hitherto ‘invisible’ members of the neonatal team.

Abstract 745 Figure 1 Expected vs observed contribution of children with likely neonatal illness to overall mortality (by age and category of death)

Abstract 745 Table 1 Neonatal conditions of all deaths of children aged less than 10 years in England, April 2019 to March 2021; split by their age at death

Conclusion For children who died after birth at 22 weeks of gestational age and before the age of 10, between April 2019 and March 2021, the majority of deaths under 10 years of age occurred in the first year of life. However, a third of deaths in the next 4 years, and a quarter of deaths in children between 5 and 9 years of age were also linkable to neonatal health problems. Over half of all children with learning difficulties who died had received additional neonatal care.

REFERENCE