

PE2099/F: Stop the proposed centralisation of specialist neonatal units in NHS Scotland

Petitioner written submission, 2 October 2025

There is a consistent argument from the Scottish Government that women who are threatening pre term labour will be transferred to a hospital that has the appropriate level of neonatal care (level 3) ahead of delivery.

The Scottish Pregnancy, Births and Neonatal Data dashboard shares data related to extremely pre-term births in Scotland. This data includes a specific focus on the location of extremely pre-term births.

The data set shows us the percentage of births at 22-26 weeks gestation resulting in a live born baby that occurred in a hospital with a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) on site.

In 2023, 100% of extremely pre-term babies were born in a hospital with level 3 care.

Between January and September 2024, this drops to 69% of extremely pre terms babies being born in a hospital with level 3 care.

Consulting with parents

There is a reference to parental consultation within the Best Start report, and in various responses to the petition, from the Scottish Government.

There has been no focused consultation with parents who have experienced neonatal care in Scotland. Any consultation after the creation of the petition had been limited and restricted.

When meeting with the petitioner and families, it has been stated that the decision has already been made.

It has been referenced by the Scottish Government that parental engagement was commissioned to feed into the original Best Start report 2016/2017, however, this was not carried out by Bliss.

Their involvement has been to input on the best interests of babies and families, as a third sector organisation, not to carry out consultation with parents on this specific issue.

Bliss have stated that they told the Scottish Government of their willingness to lead a consultation with parents. The consultation (results published in April 2025) was led by the Scottish Government and Health Improvement Scotland.