Messages for children and parents

Children and parents prefer care at home with support from CCNTs - provided that they feel safe and can get hospital care when needed.

Caring for ill children can be costly for families, including time off work, travel and food in hospital.

CCNTs can provide reassurance and help parents feel confidence to care for children at home with flexible support.

Some parents will only need support by telephone contact, others have home visits

Children and parents value CCNT care and many believe that it has reduced their need for hospital care.

Further information

The full final report can be downloaded from The University of Manchester:

www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/jrul/item/?pid=uk-ac-man-scw:140277

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Moving care closer to home

Research summary for children and parents
What this study was about

Children who are very ill need care in hospital but some children could be looked after at home. Community Children’s Nurses are specially trained to support families to continue caring for ill children in their own homes. This can be better for children and their families. It also costs less money for the National Health Service. Most children in England now have a Community Children’s Nursing Team (CCNT). There are different kinds across England. We did this study to try to find out how CCNTs can best help children and families. We also wanted to know the costs for the NHS and families. We did this to help the NHS give the best value for money.

How we did the study

First of all we found out about the CCNTs and hospitals in 10 areas. We telephoned them and asked for information about which problems they help children with and how they organise their work. We also looked at the records of all emergency hospital admissions for children to see if there were differences in the 10 areas. Then we chose 3 CCNTs to look at more closely. Questionnaires were given to parents after their children had been under CCNT care. Altogether we got back 736 questionnaires filled in by parents. We also interviewed 13 children, 29 parents or carers and 39 health care providers (nurses, doctors, managers and other NHS staff).

What we found out

Children told us that staying in hospital was best if they had a serious problem but they preferred to be at home as long as they felt safe there. Most parents found the CCNTs helpful when they cared for their children at home. Parents also described how home care could be less disruptive than hospitalisation. They said it was important to know they could get hospital care if their children became more ill. Children seemed to be safe at home, only nine parents said they needed to telephone for an ambulance and five parents telephoned their out-of-hours doctor while their child was under the care of a CCNT.

Some children’s community nurses provided supplies and practical care. Mostly they gave advice and education about looking after ill children.
Most parents who filled in questionnaires said that their child spent less time in hospital because of CCNT care. We cannot be certain which children would have been in hospital if there was not a CCNT. Different numbers of children were admitted to hospitals in different areas. The reasons for these differences were not clear but some of them may have been to do with the hospital. This makes it difficult to find out which CCNTs helped most children to avoid being in hospital.

There were differences in the way that CCNTs were linked with hospitals and family doctors. One looked after children when they had been in the Accident and Emergency where the CCNT was based. The community children’s nurses worked in the hospital and as well as in children’s homes. Another followed up children after they had stayed overnight in hospital. The last CCNT was linked to more services and looked after more children sent by their family doctor than the other CCNTs.

The cost to the NHS was very different in the CCNTs. This was often due to differences in the number of children returning to hospital during CCNT care. There were also differences in how much the CCNTs used telephone contact rather than home visits.

**What this means**

Better links between hospitals and other NHS services are known to help people to be cared for at home. Basing a CCNT in the Accident and Emergency department can help to make good links. It is also important that there are good links with family doctors and other NHS services outside hospital, particularly for children with long term conditions.