



Bliss Baby Charter Forth Valley Royal Hospital

We are delighted to announce that Forth Valley Royal Hospital neonatal unit (NHS Forth Valley Health Board) has successfully completed its Gold accreditation and has demonstrated that there are sufficient procedures, practices, and facilities in place to empower parents and carers to be partners in care through joint decision-making and hands on care, as well as understanding families' needs and availability in order to provide truly individualised care. This facilitates a solid foundation for Family Integrated Care.

These were the evaluation findings of the Bliss Baby Charter accreditation assessment which was carried out both in person and online with Forth Valley Royal Hospital neonatal unit on 31st July 2025. The assessment was carried out by Bliss Baby Charter Officer, Charis Samuels, and Volunteer Assessors, Tanya Dunbar and Victoria McCulloch. The Baby Charter lead for the unit was Kirsty Wotherspoon.

Summary

The team at Forth Valley is clearly passionate about FiCare and the experience of the families whilst they are on the Unit. The Unit is led by a strong, well respected and extremely dedicated Ward Manager Pamela Connolly who has pushed the Unit hard to ensure great team cohesion and family integration. Feedback from parents on the day was extremely positive, in particular with regards to involvement and the support they received from staff. The whole team felt like a family that parents and carers were very much part of.

Key findings and best practice

We have been impressed by many aspects of the unit's care, but these elements stood out in particular:

- Staff work with Muslim families to feel more comfortable around donor milk. They have engaged with the Human Milk bank kinship programme following feedback from previous families. Staff implement a system where the families automatically are given the unique ID of the donor and aim to keep a batch of milk aside for each Muslim family so they can be certain they get milk from a limited pool.



- Comprehensive welcome pack introducing all families to the unit (translated into the top 3 languages spoken on the unit). There is an additional baby diary/ scrap book and craft supply pack for each family with a baby born less than 33 weeks provided at admission.
- Tea trolley training and quizzes with prizes for staff on developmental care and feeding routinely, to provide a fun spin on staff progression and consolidation of key knowledge.
- Thoughtfully decorated quiet space in the green room, perfect for quiet conversations and to allow parents to take some time out from the unit.
- Encouragement and provision for families to take a walk with their babies outside around the picturesque leafy grounds, and to make use of their NICU garden within the hospital with staff support (where required).
- Successful coffee mornings and regular events (that include Dad's pizza nights, wreath making and hot chocolate parties) inviting graduate families to reconnect and share their stories.
- Parents appeared relaxed and very much a part of the team on the unit, one family expressed that 'they would be quite sad leaving the unit' due to the close relationships they've built with the staff.
- Fantastic links with Held in our Hearts bereavement counselling and provision.

Recommendations for the future

Following the review of the audit and the assessment visit, we would like to make a few recommendations for the unit to review over the next three years

- Successful installation of the card entry system to provide greater autonomy for parents.
- To see to completion the redesigns for parent accommodation facilities to include beautiful light boxes, to make these spaces calming and welcoming.
- To refresh the feedback collation process for families transitioning onto the unit.
- Continue to monitor spoken languages on the unit and expand the bank of translated materials accordingly.
- Expand knowledge and connections for Asylum seekers and other local services.
- Both the Unit staff and the Psychologist highlighted to the assessment team that they felt that more time was needed by the Psychologist to fully support all families on the Unit. The Unit is considering a business case, and will have full Bliss support for an increase of provision but should continue to investigate ways in the meantime to increase the psychological support for families. We would recommend that this was further investigated along with a general increase in psychological provision to come into line with the BAPM recommendations of 1 WTE per 20 cot spaces.



- Work to improve wifi provision on the unit.
- Staff are proactively investigating the possibility of providing a food pantry for parents to access, we wish them luck with the practicalities of setting this up.

C Samuels

**Charis Samuels (Bliss Scotland Baby Charter Officer)
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21 August 2025

