


<b>Northern Neonatal</b> <b>Operational Delivery Network</b>		
<b>Clinical Guidance</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>SCU Clinical Thresholds Summary</b>	
<b>Reference</b>	GL-05	
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<b>Target Audience</b>	Special Care Units, Regional Transport Team	
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This clinical guideline has been developed to ensure appropriate evidence based standards of care throughout the Northern Neonatal Operational Delivery Network (NNODN). The appropriate use and interpretation of this guideline in providing clinical care remains the responsibility of the individual clinician. If there is any doubt please discuss with a senior colleague.		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>It is the responsibility of all users of this guideline to ensure that the correct version is being used.</b></p>		

<p><b>1.0 Introduction</b></p> <p>This document summarises gestational age thresholds, birthweight thresholds, and clinical criteria requiring transfer from a Special Care Unit (SCU) to either a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) or Local Neonatal Unit (LNU) depending on clinical need and based on the NHS England Neonatal Critical Care Service Specification (March 2024).</p> <p>This document was created in response to the NCCR pathway and unit designation changes implemented across the Northern Neonatal ODN region on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026.</p>
<p><b>2.0 Guideline Scope</b></p> <p><b>Principles of care</b> Where possible, women will be transferred in-utero to a Network NICU or LNU when gestational age, anticipated birth weight or need for complex, intensive or high dependency care is anticipated in line with ODN care pathways.</p>
<p><b>3.0 Main Guideline Content</b></p> <p><b>Gestational Age Thresholds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singleton births ≥32+0 weeks</li> <li>• Multiples ≥32+0 weeks</li> </ul> <p>ODN exception: Babies inborn within 24 hours of threshold gestation may be considered for ongoing care at SCU.</p>
<p><b>Birthweight Thresholds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCU provides care for babies with a birthweight ≥1000 g</li> </ul> <p>ODN exception: 5% leeway</p>
<p><b>Limits on care at a SCU that need discussion with regional transport team, NNeTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care beyond initial stabilisation to babies less than 31+6 weeks gestation</li> <li>• Care beyond initial stabilisation to babies with a birth weight &lt;1,000g</li> <li>• Intensive care (HRG XA01) for any baby apart from initial stabilisation prior to transfer</li> <li>• Babies &lt;1250g should trigger a call to NNeTS regarding Parenteral Nutrition</li> <li>• Prolonged (more than 48 hours) provision of CPAP or HighFlow</li> </ul>

### **Clinical conditions ordinarily requiring transfer to NICU or LNU**

- Advanced respiratory therapies
- Therapeutic hypothermia
- Need for multi-organ support: intubated ventilation plus inotropes, insulin infusion, chest drain, exchange transfusion or prostaglandin infusion beyond stabilisation.
- Any complex intensive care including renal failure, DIC, metabolic acidosis.

### **Repatriation**

A baby should be considered for repatriation once high dependency care is no longer needed, and the required level of ongoing care matches that provided in an SCU (typically special care).

There is no specific period that the baby needs to be out of high dependency care for, for repatriation to be considered, however, a 24- 48-hour period of stability would be considered reasonable at clinician discretion.

### **ODN exceptions for IUT transfers**

- If a woman is in need of an IUT within 24 hours of 32+0 weeks (singleton or multiple) it would be reasonable for the clinical team to consider not transferring the woman to an LNU or NICU, depending on pathway, if there is no capacity in region and before considering an out of region transfer.

## **4.0 Monitoring & Audit**

### **Exception reporting (BadgerNet)**

- Monthly exception reporting via BadgerNet will be produced by the ODN and shared with Network Clinical Lead and SCU Clinical Lead.
- Clinical exceptions will be reviewed every quarter via the ODN Governance meeting.

ODN exception reporting will identify:

- Babies on CPAP or HighFlow on day 3 of life or beyond
- Babies <32wks or <1000g in an SCU beyond 1 day of life
- Babies receiving intensive care in a SCU beyond 1 day/stabilisation