

Secure video service helps UK baby hospice, Zoë's Place, keep families connected.



The Challenge

It is estimated that there are more than 49,000 children living with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition in the UK. Outside of hospital, many of these children and their families receive support from children's hospices and charity organisations.

[Zoë's Place Baby Hospice](#) supports families across its three hospices in Coventry, Liverpool and Middlesbrough. The charity provides palliative, respite and end-of-life care to over 50 families every year at its Middlesbrough hospice alone. They offer holistic care to babies and infants with complex needs aged from birth to 5-years old, in addition to supporting their families.

For parents, a hospice stay for their child can be emotionally challenging and lead to separation anxiety and heightened levels of stress. To help provide reassurance to families, Zoë's Place tried calling parents regularly to check-in and share verbal updates but found this approach was disrupting their well-needed respite time.

Such separation issues have only been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. The resulting restrictions have meant that hospices are not currently able to permit parents or other family members to visit, so teams have had to work even harder to ensure parents feel comfortable when away from their children.

The Solution

To help alleviate separation anxiety for parents, the care team at Zoë's Place in Middlesbrough began exploring secure smartphone recorded photo and video sharing messaging as an advanced way to communicate with families.

After recommendations from charity sponsors and friends, the team started trialling [vCreate NICU Diaries](#), a popular service with NHS neonatal and paediatric units across the country. The secure system allows staff to record and upload short video-clips and photos of the children on approved devices which are then shared directly with parents.

Ashleigh Rickards, Deputy Head of Care at Zoë's Place, said: "Since implementing vCreate NICU Diaries in December 2019, our team have helped support numerous children and their families, each of whom has benefitted from the service. Taking and sharing photo and video updates quickly became part of our daily routine, and now our team try to use the system on an hourly basis depending on the activities and the children's moods.

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Rather than interrupting parents' vital respite time with calls, the photo and video updates provide visual reassurance that their child is settled and happy. There is no requirement for parents to acknowledge or reply to these updates, and they can be viewed at their leisure.

Ashleigh Rickards said: "For some parents, the only time they spend apart from their child is when they come into the hospice. At Zoë's Place, we know how distressing this can be, so having access to vCreate NICU Diaries is invaluable, as it enables the team to share photos and videos of a family's child throughout the session. Not only does this help parents to feel connected, but allows them to focus on their own wellbeing too."

The Impact

Zoë's Place's utilisation of the vCreate NICU Diaries service has helped improve communication channels with families, reduce separation anxiety for parents and provide a support lifeline during the coronavirus pandemic.

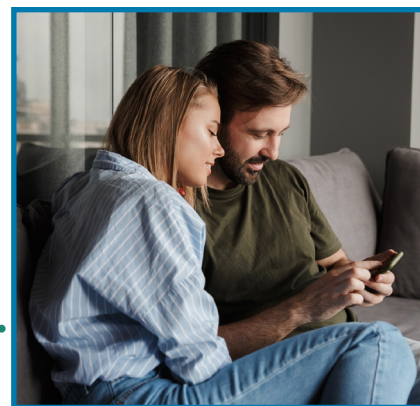
Not only has the platform positively impacted relations with families, it has also given teams a much-needed morale boost. Upon receiving a visual update via the platform, parents can share messages back with the team to thank them or ask questions.

Ashleigh Rickards said: "Our teams love receiving responses from parents on photos and videos they've shared. Our traditional interaction with families has changed beyond recognition due to the pandemic and our team really value connecting with families and knowing that their work is making a difference. It's particularly moving to hear from parents who have never previously left their child and to know that they are able to relax because of the photos and videos we've shared."

Upon reviewing the impact that vCreate NICU Diaries has had on families, Zoë's Place received an abundance of positive feedback. Alongside reassuring parents that their child is settled, the updates also ensure that milestone moments are captured, shared, and remembered.

Ashleigh Rickards continued: "A lot of our parents use the service to look back on their child's memories and milestones with us. The vCreate NICU Diaries service is just that – a digital diary that the parents can download and keep forever. They never want to miss out on a moment of their child's experience, and it's a pleasure to be able to share special memories with them."

Zoë's Place continues to utilise vCreate NICU Diaries to help keep families connected. To help support children's hospices, vCreate has pledged to donate its technology to all UK and SI children's hospices for free so that teams can focus on getting started and helping support families with visual updates.



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If you are a children's hospice interested in exploring how vCreate NICU Diaries could assist your team, please send an email to theteam@vcreate.tv or visit www.vcreate.tv/nicudiaries