

# Paediatric units implement secure video service to keep parents connected with their children



## The Challenge

**In the UK and Republic of Ireland, paediatric health services support millions of children and their families, with more than 800,000 children under 15 years-old admitted to hospital annually. Of these, approximately 20,000 children are admitted to Paediatric Intensive Care Units (PICUs) each year.**

Whether their stay is long or short, a child's inpatient journey can be extremely stressful for families, particularly when they are unable to be together at the unit. For many parents, who must juggle work commitments, other children and potentially long distances to the hospital, it can be challenging to visit every day.

Difficulties surrounding visitation have only worsened during the coronavirus pandemic, with disruption to scheduled care and a one-parent visitation policy in place for many UK paediatric units. As a result, families are unable to spend as much time with their child in hospital which is impacting their levels of stress and increasing separation anxiety.

## The Solution

**Freeman Hospital provides children's services for Newcastle, the North East and beyond, and receives referrals from hospitals both locally and nationally seeking their specialist care.**

Recognising the challenges parents face when trying to visit their child in hospital, particularly when they are out-of-region, Freeman Hospital and its supporting charity, [Children's Heart Unit Fund \(CHUF\)](#), began investigating the use of secure asynchronous video messaging as a way of keeping families connected.

In November 2020, with the support and funding of CHUF, Freeman Hospital started implementing the [vCreate](#) service across its Children's Heart unit, which includes a PICU, a High Dependency Unit (HDU) and a Children's Ward. The secure system allows paediatric professionals to record and upload short video-clips and photos of the children on approved devices which are then shared directly with parents.

Staff Nurse at Freeman Heart Unit's PICU, Rebecca Jack, said: "The vCreate service has completely changed the way we do things on the unit. While we continue to ring parents with updates on their child's condition, the photos and videos we've been sharing provide parents with a physical glimpse into the ward and their child's wellbeing.

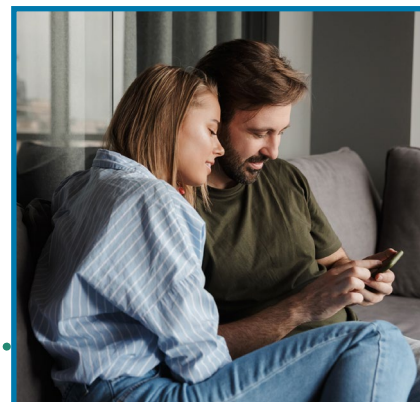
*"It takes seconds to send a picture and, when we receive positive comments back from families, it's so uplifting and motivating to know the difference they have made."*

**Rebecca Jack,**  
Staff Nurse,  
Freeman's Heart PICU

"It takes seconds to send a picture and, when we receive positive comments back from families, it's so uplifting and motivating to know the difference they have made. As the process is quick and easy to learn, it was simple for our team to work it into our daily routine. For example, capturing moments of progress during physio sessions, sharing clips of patients enjoying play, and sending photos when the children are settled and ready for bed."

Like many Paediatric facilities, within Freeman Hospital there can be a lot of patient movement between units depending on the patient's progress and condition.

Rebecca Jack said: "A child's transition between units can be really upsetting for parents who worry about what this means for their child's condition, care and mental wellbeing. We always report changes like this over the phone, but physically seeing that their child is okay through photos and videos offers an extra level of reassurance that they're settled, and the new environment and team are still familiar and supportive."



## The Outcomes .....

**Less than a year since implementation, the impact of the service on the paediatric units' teams, families, and patients has been transformative.**

Instead of families missing out on key moments or special milestones – a prevalent issue even before the coronavirus pandemic – the secure service allows nurses to record and save a visual diary of a child's paediatric journey that parents can download and keep forever.

Rebecca Jack, Staff Nurse at Freeman's Heart PICU, said: "One of the greatest benefits of the service is being able to capture, save and share a child's progress on the unit with their family no matter the distance or circumstance."

"We have one family who live out-of-region in Scotland, hundreds of miles from the hospital, whose little boy is with us awaiting a heart transplant. His parents rotate visiting on a weekly basis, and a week's progression on the unit can be massive. Once, when his mother left hospital for the week, the patient could barely lift his head up and, by the following week, he was actively interacting and playing. It was a joy to capture this progress and share it with the family so they could experience it together."

The vCreate service is funded by the hospital's associated charity, CHUF, who also support an array of initiatives and programmes for the children and staff on the units.

Charlotte Campbell, Director of Fundraising and Operations at CHUF said: "When we heard about vCreate, we knew what a difference it would make to our paediatric units who work with a lot of families out-of-region. We're delighted to see the impact it has and continues to have for everyone from parents to patients to nurses. It's quickly become an essential part of the unit, and we're planning to reflect this by continuing to work closely with vCreate and our paediatric teams."

vCreate supports the Freeman Hospital's paediatric units along with over 125 paediatric and neonatal units across the UK, helping keep families connected with their children and infants.



**Charlotte Campbell,**  
*Director of Fundraising  
& Operations at CHUF*



**If you are a paediatric unit interested in exploring how vCreate could assist your team, please send an email to [theteam@vcreate.tv](mailto:theteam@vcreate.tv) or visit [www.vcreate.tv/nicudiaries](http://www.vcreate.tv/nicudiaries)**