Supporting children born early

Based on NICE guidance on developmental follow-up of children and young people born preterm

**Visual summary**

Children born preterm may experience problems with their development which can affect learning and function, activities and participation.

**Most severe developmental problems will be detected by 2 years of age. However, problems affecting scholastic learning and emotional development may be detected later.** For children born before 28+0 weeks' gestation, a further assessment is recommended at 4 years of age, because these children have a considerably higher risk of special educational needs.

**Enhanced developmental support and surveillance**

- **Surveillance**
  - 2 face-to-face follow-up visits in the first year (corrected age) that focus on development
  - Detailed developmental assessment
    - Identify if child is at risk of developmental delay, by reviewing child's physical, emotional and educational development.
- **Developmental support**
  - For the first two years (corrected age), provide support for parents or carers:
    - Advice in response to developmental concerns
    - Psychological and emotional support
    - Advice on home care, such as feeding, sleeping and interaction with the baby
  - The support given should use a variety of approaches, according to individual needs:
    - Face-to-face meetings
    - Telephone helpline
    - Electronic messages

- **Further developmental assessment**
  - Most severe developmental problems will be detected by 2 years of age. However, problems affecting scholastic learning and emotional development may be detected later. For children born before 28+0 weeks' gestation, a further assessment is recommended at 4 years of age, because these children have a considerably higher risk of special educational needs.

**Standard support and surveillance**

In England, the Healthy Child Programme is provided to all children up to five years of age and it includes:

- Health and development reviews
- Screening (Hearing, Vision)
- Immunisations
- Promotion of development (Social, Emotional)

**Ongoing care and support**

Primary and secondary education professionals should be aware that preterm birth may be a factor in learning or behavioural problems, which can emerge at any point during education. Prompt referral to educational support services may be needed.

*ADHD = Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder