Whittington Babies - Supporting Families of sick and premature babies at Whittington Hospital since 1986.

About Whittington Babies
Whittington Babies is a registered charity (no 295359). It was established in 1986 by a group of parents whose babies had spent time in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) at Whittington Hospital in Highgate, North London. The units care for over 400 sick and premature babies every year. The charity aims to support the families of babies who spend time in the units, and the doctors and nurses who work in NICU and SCBU.

In Context – some numbers:

- **1 in every 9 babies, or 80,000** babies are born premature or sick in the UK each year
- **£1,200** cost for one night’s stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
- **400** babies cared for each year in the Neonatal Intensive Care (NICU) and Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU)
- **36** weeks or less (for a baby to be classed as premature)
- **1.0–2.5 lbs** Typical birth weight (500-1200g) for an extremely premature baby (born 12-17 weeks early)

Whittington Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU)
The Maternity Unit at Whittington Hospital delivers approximately 4000 babies each year. Of these 8-10% need admission to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Many of the babies are born prematurely, some of them several months before they should have been (40 weeks is considered full term). Extremely premature babies require complex medical care while they complete their development outside of their mother’s womb. Other babies are born near or at full term, but may need specialist treatment or breathing support after a difficult birth.

Length of stay at the hospital is very variable – it can be from one day to several months. Generally speaking, most premature babies are ready to go home around their due date – some earlier, some later.

Thanks to progress in medical science, the dedication of the clinical staff and the inspirational fighting spirit of even our tiniest babies, the unit is a very positive place. However, we never forget the precious babies who are sadly too ill to survive and do not make it home.
Whittington Babies – Parent Support

One of the valuable services that the charity provides is the Parent Support Group. This is made up of volunteers from the Charity who provide a family support network to parents with babies in NICU and SCBU. Many parents find this support, from people who have experienced first-hand life on the unit, very helpful at what can be a difficult time for themselves and their families.

Whittington Babies – Children’s Summer Party

Each year in May the charity hosts a party for babies and families who have been through NICU and SCBU in the preceding year. The party provides a relaxed opportunity for families to be reunited with the doctors, nurses and parent supporters who played a significant role in the early days of their child’s life. Parents can also catch up with other parents they met during their time at the hospital.

Whittington Babies – Fund Raising

One of our primary objectives is to raise funds to purchase equipment and supply additional services which will improve the quality of life for the sick and premature babies in the unit and their families.

In recent years we have furnished the overnight rooms at the unit that allow parents to be closer to and spend more time with their baby. Recent acquisitions also include a TV set and DVD player for the parents’ room on the unit, toys for siblings visiting a baby on the unit, as well as medical text books for the staff and books for parents relating to prematurity. Whittington Babies has also purchased moveable breast pumps so mothers can express milk in comfort, specialist cots and equipment that monitor sound levels on the unit – ensuring that everybody is aware of keeping noise levels down, resulting in calm and relaxed babies. Gel cushions help alleviate pressure caused by babies with limited movement.