

## Session 7:

# Voices From the Start: Using Infant Experience to Shape Better Care and Family Support



Are you  
**PREM  
AWARE** ?

# Ensuring a Best Start in Life for children born prematurely

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# The Smallest Things



## Contacts



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The Smallest Things registered charity number 1171631



“When people talk about ‘bringing their baby home,’ they often imagine that’s when the worry ends. But the truth is, NICU changes the way you parent forever.”



# A best start in life ?

- Earliest life experiences have been shaped by the medical world of neonatal intensive care, weeks or even months before their due date.
- A traumatic and early start to life exposes children to emotional, physical, and environmental stressors which are known to affect the developing brain.
- Attachment difficulties and unmet parental mental health needs can impact on the health and development of children born prematurely.



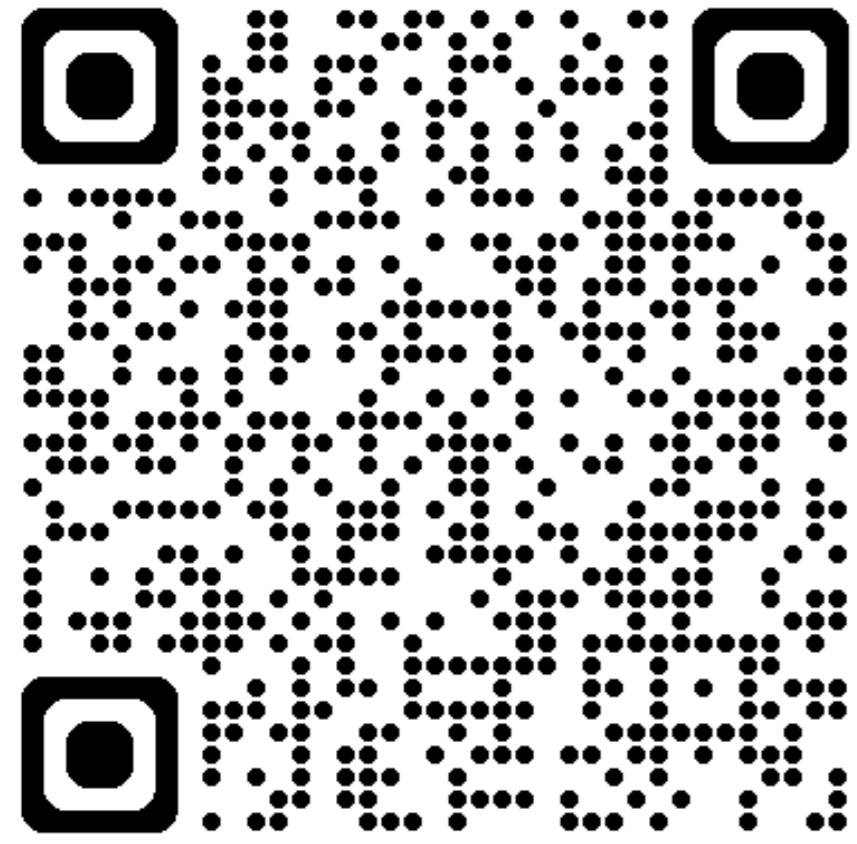
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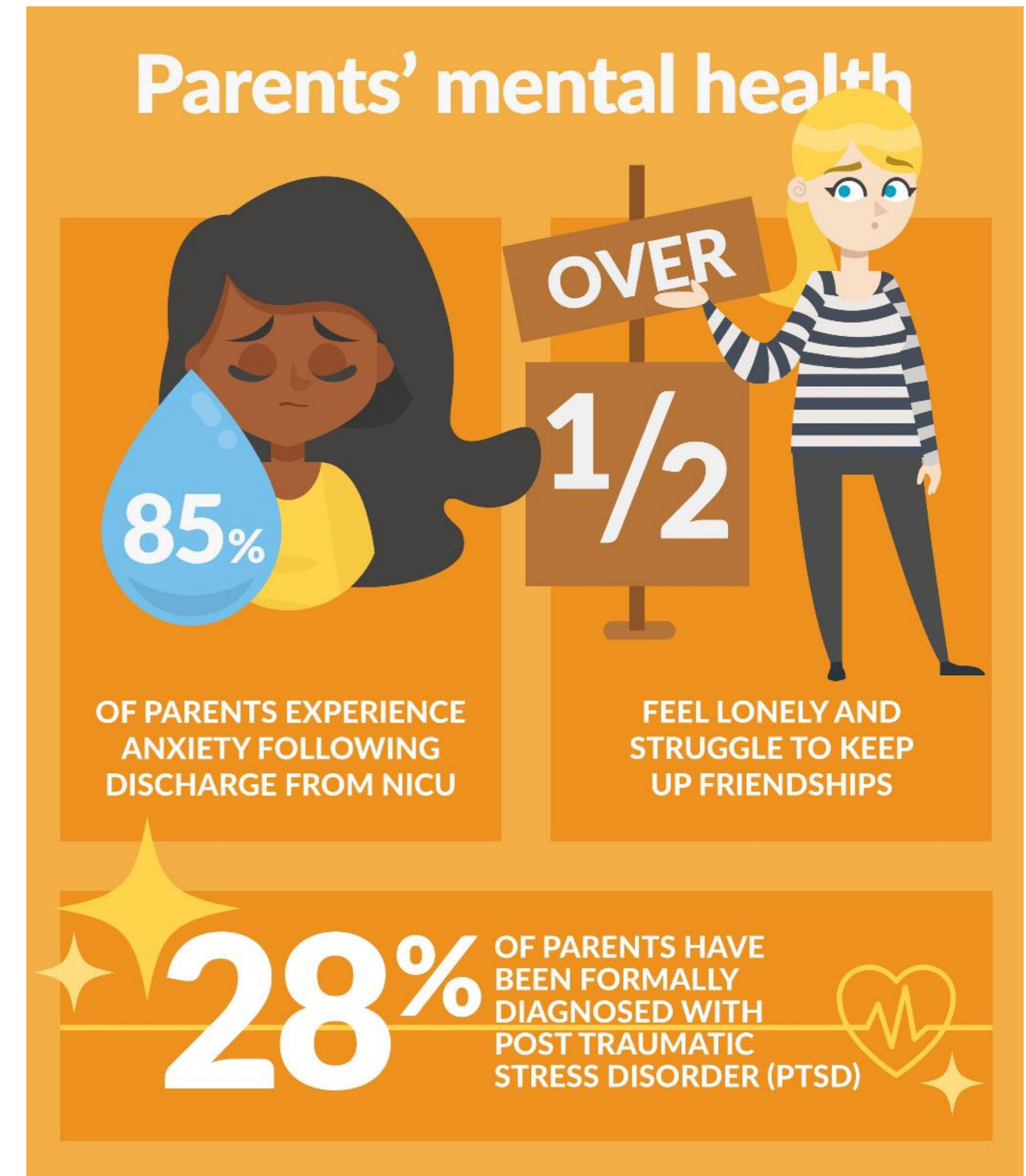


9 out of 10  
parents say their  
journey lasts long  
after leaving the  
neonatal unit

#AfterNICU

# Parents' mental health

- 85% of parents reported anxiety.
- More than two-thirds (67%) described experiencing 'flash backs'
- Over half felt isolated and lonely after their NICU stay
- Families struggle to access universal services
- 35% said they felt their Health Visitor understood their or their babies needs.



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# Living with uncertainty & trauma

- Over half are readmitted to hospital
- Adds to wider financial and employment challenges
- Constant state of worry and uncertainty
- Exacerbates and prolongs mental health difficulties for families



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# The impact on learning

Children born prematurely are more likely than their peers to have a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND).

Children born extremely prematurely (before 28 weeks) are most likely to need extra support.

Research also shows that children born just a few weeks early can still face difficulties at school.

The impact is life-long.



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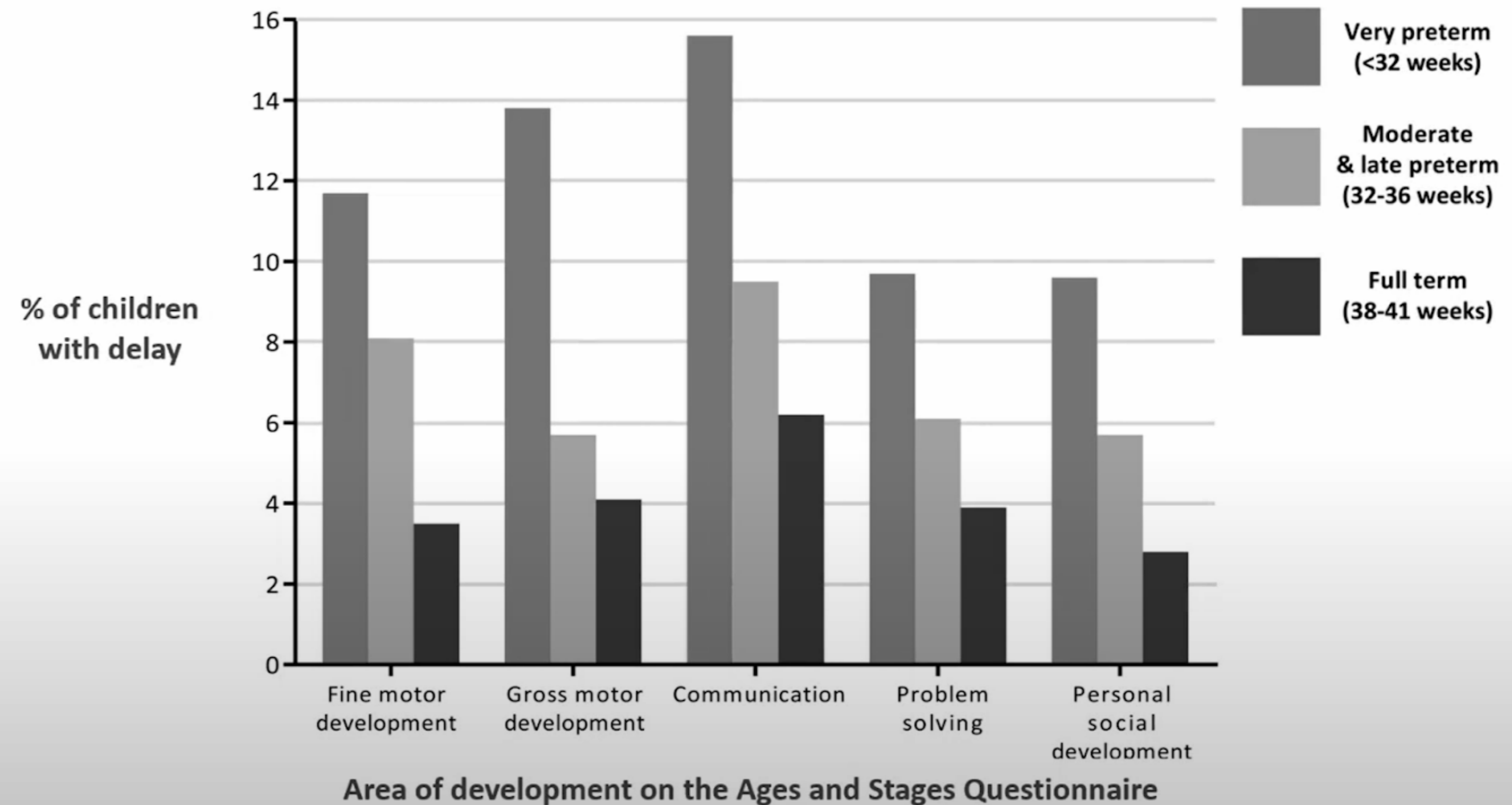
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# Ready for school?

## Development in the early years



[Source: Kerstjens et al. *Journal of Pediatrics* 2011]



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# Prem Aware – ready to support children born prematurely



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# Are you PREM AWARE



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# Training and knowledge

6 modules, including a new 'early years' module in partnership with The Smallest Things provides training and practical strategies

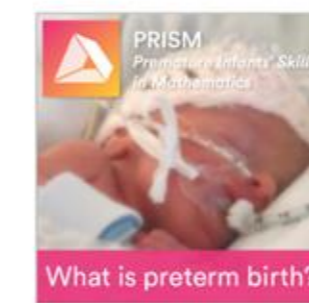
Suitable for early years, primary and secondary school educators.



## Preterm Birth Information for Education Professionals

Welcome to the Preterm Birth Information for Education Professionals home page. These six learning resources have been developed to improve your knowledge and confidence in supporting prematurely born children in the classroom and in preschool settings.

Please navigate through the resources by selecting each image below.



### 1. What is preterm birth? [↗](#) [opens in new window]

Learning outcomes:

- To define preterm birth
- To understand that the more preterm a baby is born, the greater the risk of developmental problems later in life



### 2. Educational outcomes following preterm birth [↗](#) [opens in new window]

Learning outcomes:

- To understand that children born preterm are at risk of special educational needs and poor academic attainment
- To identify which school subjects children born preterm are most likely to struggle with



### 3. Cognitive and motor development following preterm birth [↗](#) [opens in new window]

Learning outcomes:

- To understand that children born preterm may have difficulties with IQ, processing speed, working memory, and hand-eye coordination
- To understand how these difficulties may impact on learning



### 4. Behavioural, social and emotional outcomes following preterm birth [↗](#) [opens in new window]

Learning outcomes:

- To understand that children born preterm may be withdrawn, anxious, and inattentive, and have difficulties developing relationships with their peers
- To understand that children born preterm don't tend to be disruptive so their needs may be overlooked in the classroom



### 5. How can education professionals support preterm children? [↗](#) [opens in new window]

Learning outcomes:

- To understand what kind of strategies might be helpful for supporting children born preterm
- To understand that preterm birth is a risk factor and an individual assessment is always necessary to provide appropriate support



### 6. Supporting children and families in the preschool years [↗](#) [opens in new window]

Learning outcomes:

- Understand how preterm birth can affect children and families in the preschool years.
- Know how parents and professionals can support preterm born children before they start school.

Now you've completed this training, why not apply for your school or setting to receive the Prem Aware Award?

# Stay in touch

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