



COMET Conference Meeting Agenda

**Putteridge Bury Conference Centre
Luton | 25th – 26th September 2025**

Please confirm your attendance by scanning or clicking the QR code



[RSVP here](#)

Conference Day 1

Thursday 25th September 2025

Putteridge Bury Conference Centre

15:00 – 15:30	Registration & Welcome Drinks
15:30 – 15:40	Welcome, <i>Dr Reema Garegrat</i> & <i>Mia Cunliffe</i>
	Evidence Based Data on Neuroprotection in Term Infants
15:40 – 16:20	<i>Prof Seetha Shankaran</i> 30 min Talk + 10 min Q&A
	Mild HIE - Status of Childhood/Adolescent Outcome
16:20 – 17:00	<i>Prof Seetha Shankaran</i> 30 min Talk + 10 min Q&A
17:00 – 17:15	Refreshment Break
	COMET Update – How we got here
17:15 – 17:50	<i>Prof Sudhin Thayyil</i> 20 min Talk + 15 min Q&A
	Mild HIE Cooling Transfers: Explaining Therapeutic Drift to Parents
17:50 – 18:10	<i>Dr Nandiran Ratnavel</i> 10 min Talk + 10 min Q&A
	Parental Consent in COMET
18:10 – 18:50	<i>Prof Kerry Woolfall</i> & <i>Dr Stuti Pant</i> 30 min Talk + 10 min Q&A
	Monthly PI Meeting – Screening Log Review
18:50 – 19:50	<i>Site Principal Investigators</i> Each PI will report on their site's screening log for the past month.
	Supportive Care during Cooling in Mild HIE: Current Evidence
19:50 – 20:30	<i>Dr Paolo Montaldo</i> 30 min Talk + 10 min Q&A
20:30 – 22:00	Dinner & Networking

Conference Day 2

Friday 26th September 2025

Morning Session | Putteridge Bury Conference Centre

08:30 – 08:45	Registration & Coffee
08:45 – 10:00	Workshop: Neurological Assessment & COMET Video Review Expanded Modified Sarnat Staging, PI Training & Re-Certification <i>Prof Sudhin Thayyil & Prof Seetha Shankaran</i>
10:00 – 10:30	Cooling mild HIE: Obstetric perspective <i>Prof Andrew Shennan</i> 15 min Talk + 15 min Q&A
10:30 – 11:00	Lessons from SURFON trial recruitment <i>Prof Elaine Boyle</i> 15 min Talk + 15 min Q&A
11:00 – 12:00	Feedback from Recruiting Site PIs – Successes & Lessons Learned
12:00 – 12:30	COMET Trial Publications, Authorship & Sub-Studies <i>Prof Sudhin Thayyil & Prof Seetha Shankaran</i> 10 min
12:30 – 13:30	Working Lunch & Networking

Afternoon Session | Putteridge Bury Conference Centre

13:30 – 15:00	Interactive Breakout Sessions (30 min each) Group A: E-screener (<i>Prof Sudhin Thayyil & Dr Anchal Dhawan</i>) Group B: Consent (<i>Prof Seetha Shankaran & Dr Stuti Pant</i>) Group C: CRF and Data (<i>Mia Cunliffe & Dr Thilipan Thaventhiran</i>)
15:00 – 15:15	Coffee Break
15:15 – 15:30	Reflections, Action Points & Closing Remarks <i>Prof Sudhin Thayyil & Prof Seetha Shankaran</i>

COMET Team



Professor Seetha Shankaran

University of Texas at Austin & Wayne State University

Prof. Shankaran is a world leader in neonatal neuroprotection and one of the most respected neonatal academics globally. Her research has transformed clinical care and inspired researchers worldwide to uphold the high standards for clinical trials that she established. She led the first randomized controlled trial of whole-body hypothermia for HIE (NEJM 2005, 2012), and her findings were subsequently replicated in three major trials—the TOBY trial (NEJM 2009), ICE trial (JAMA Pediatrics 2010), and neo.nEURO trial (Pediatrics 2010)—establishing the global standard of care in high-income countries. She subsequently led the Optimising Cooling trial (JAMA 2014, 2016) and co-led the Delayed Hypothermia trial (JAMA 2017), the HELIX trial (Lancet Global Health 2021), and the PREMIE Hypothermia trial (JAMA Pediatrics 2025). She is also the Co-Chief Investigator of the COMET trial.



Professor Sudhin Thayyil

Chair of Perinatal Neuroscience, Imperial College London

Prof. Shankaran's pioneering work on the first whole-body hypothermia trial transformed clinical practice worldwide and inspired Dr. Thayyil to pursue a PhD during his clinical neonatal grid training, setting him on the path to a clinical academic career. Today, Prof. Thayyil leads the world's largest research programme in neonatal neuroprotection and has served as Chief Investigator for major international HIE studies, including MARBLE, HELIX, EMBRACE, PREVENT, CONNECTIONS, and COMET. He has held both an NIHR Clinician Scientist award and an NIHR Advanced Fellowship. His group was the first to describe the heterogeneity of HIE using gene expression profiles and to demonstrate how this variability influences treatment responses. He has secured over £24 million in research funding, and his team maintains an exceptional record of successful external fellowships—the highest of any neonatal research group in the UK.



Dr Paolo Montaldo

Senior Lecturer & Neonatal Consultant, University of Campania and Imperial College London

Dr. Montaldo is a clinical academic neonatologist with expertise in neuroprotection, neonatal neurology, bioinformatics, and continuous glucose monitoring. He completed a PhD at Imperial College London in 2019 under the supervision of Prof. Thayyil, supported by an MRC Doctoral Fellowship, focusing on gene expression in neonatal encephalopathy. He is a world leader in transcriptomics in HIE, with over 70 publications and research funding exceeding £3 million. Dr. Montaldo leads international sites for the COMET trial and is a gold-standard Bayley IV assessor.



Dr Reema Garegrat

Neonatal Neurology Research Fellow, Imperial College London

Dr. Garegrat completed paediatric and neonatal subspecialty training in Mumbai and Pune before joining Imperial College London as a Neonatal Neurology Senior Clinical Research Fellow. She is the lead of the EMBRACE trial and the neurological training lead for the COMET trial. She is a certified Bayley-IV examiner and gold-standard assessor, and an Expanded Modified Sarnat (EMS) trainer, having trained over 600 clinicians from more than 40 NHS hospitals for the COMET trial. She has published over 20 research papers and secured grant funding exceeding £3 million. She is currently starting a PhD at Imperial College London.

COMET Team



Dr Stuti Pant

Senior Programme Manager, Imperial College London

Pant is a social scientist and qualitative researcher in the Department of Brain Sciences at Imperial College London. Since joining Imperial in 2019, she has published 16 papers—including in *The Lancet* journals and *BMJ*—and secured over £5 million in research funding. Her work spans grassroots health in India, policy engagement at the World Health Assembly, and leadership in trial management, including redefining communication, ethical, and consent practices. She completed her PhD in 2024 on bereavement and newborn death and has been recognized for research leadership, public engagement, and EDI initiatives, with a strong commitment to improving outcomes for mothers and babies.



Ms Mia E Cunliffe

Trial Monitor, Imperial College London

Ms. Mia Cunliffe has over four years of experience in clinical trial management and monitoring, having previously worked in clinical trials units at Queen Mary University London, Kings College Hospital NHS Trust, and the University of Oxford (2021–2023), supporting a range of clinical studies. She joined Imperial College London in 2025 and is the trial manager for the COMET trial, serving as the first point of contact.



Dr Thilipan Thaventhiran

Trial Manager, Imperial College London

Dr Thaventhiran is a qualified paediatric nurse with a Bachelor's and Master's from Imperial College and a PhD in Immunology from Liverpool University. He has over four years of experience in clinical and academic research within the NHS at Queen Mary University London and King's College London, leading NIHR portfolio studies and multi-centre CTIMPs. He has co-authored 17+ publications, managed large datasets, and has extensive knowledge of regulatory requirements. He joined Imperial College London in 2025 as trial manager for the COMET trial.



Dr Anchal Dhawan

Clinical Research Fellow, Imperial College London

Dr. Anchal Dhawan completed her MBBS in 2021 and subsequently worked in paediatric and neonatal intensive care in India. She joined Imperial College London in 2025 as a research Fellow on the COMET trial and serves as the key lead for COMET eScreen at the recruiting sites.

COMET Team



Professor Andrew Shennan

Professor of Obstetrics, King's College London.

Professor Andrew Shennan, OBE, is Tommy's Chair of Maternal and Fetal Health and Professor of Obstetrics at King's College London. An internationally recognised leader in preterm birth and pre-eclampsia research, he directs the Preterm Birth Surveillance Clinic at St Thomas' Hospital and has led major global trials to improve maternal and neonatal outcomes. He has published extensively, secured significant research funding, and advises on national and international maternity policy. His former PhD students include Professor Lucy Chappell, now CEO of the NIHR, and he currently serves as the Obstetric Lead for the COMET trial.



Professor Kerry Woolfall

Professor of Health Research Methodology, University of Liverpool

Professor Kerry Woolfall is Professor of Health Research Methodology in the Department of Public Health, Policy and Systems, with a social science background. Her research focuses on understanding clinician and patient perspectives to improve the design and delivery of health research, including leading national guidance on trials without prior consent in emergency and critical care. She is Head of Public Health, Policy and Systems, has led or co-investigated numerous NIHR and MRC-funded studies, and leads the parental consent aspects of the COMET trial.



Dr Nandiran (Rats) Ratnavel

Consultant Neonatologist, London Neonatal Transfer Service & Royal London Hospital

Dr. Ratnavel is a Consultant with the London Neonatal Transfer Service, Chair of the UK Neonatal Transport Group, and Chair of the Thames Perinatal Group, providing national leadership in neonatal transport and perinatal care. He also leads the London Cool Trip database and serves as the COMET site Principal Investigator for Barts Health, alongside Dr. John Ho (Whipps Cross Hospital) and Dr. Imdad Ali (Newham General Hospital).

Our Guest Speaker



Professor Elaine Boyle

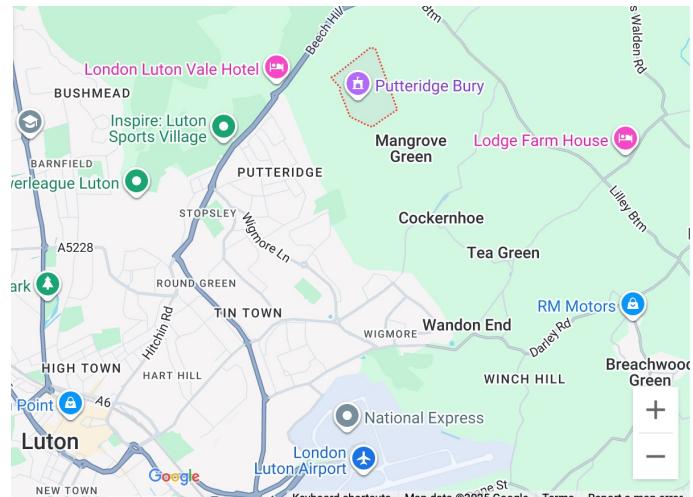
Professor of Neonatal Medicine & LCFC Professor in Child Health, University of Leicester | Honorary Consultant Neonatologist, University Hospital of Leicester NHS Trust

Professor Boyle's research focuses on the impact of gestational age at birth on neonatal and childhood outcomes, particularly in moderate-late preterm and early term infants. She led the LAMBS population-based studies, developed the BAPM Framework for Early Care of Moderate to Late Preterm Infants, and is Chief Investigator for SurfON, a large UK multicentre trial investigating surfactant use in late preterm and early term infants with respiratory distress.

Conference Location

Venue Details

Putteridge Bury Conference Centre
Hitchin Road
Luton, Bedfordshire
LU2 8LE
Tel: +44 (0)1582 489065 / 489069



Map & Directions

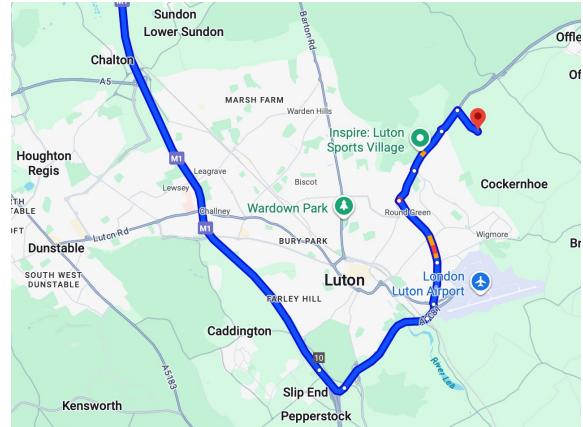
For Sat Nav, please use postcode **LU2 8DL** (the LU2 8LE postcode may direct you via a closed private road).

Travel Information

By Road

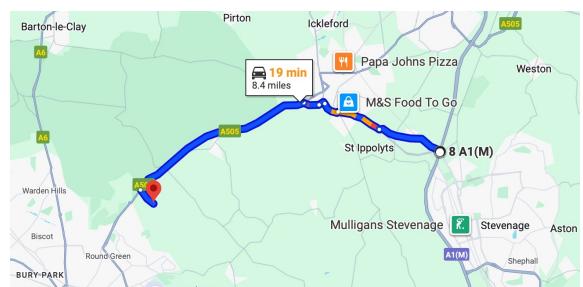
From the M1 (North):

Exit at Junction 10 and follow signs for Hitchin (A505). The Putteridge Bury campus entrance is signposted shortly after the Butterfield roundabout.



From the A1(M) (South):

Exit at Junction 8 (Stevenage/Hitchin) and follow signs to Hitchin. Continue on the A505 towards Luton. The Putteridge Bury campus entrance is signposted on the right shortly after passing through Stopsley.



Parking:

150 free parking spaces available for delegates.

By Rail

The nearest railway stations are:

- Luton (served by Thameslink and East Midlands Railway)
- Hitchin (served by Great Northern)

Both stations are approximately a 15-minute taxi ride to Putteridge Bury Conference Centre, with fares typically in the range of £10–£15.

Accommodation



Hotel: London Luton Vale Hotel, Butterfield Business Park, Hitchin Rd, Luton LU2 8DL

Phone: 01582 435300

Check-in: from 3:00 PM on Thursday

Check-out: by 11:00 AM

Please check in at the hotel reception desk on arrival.

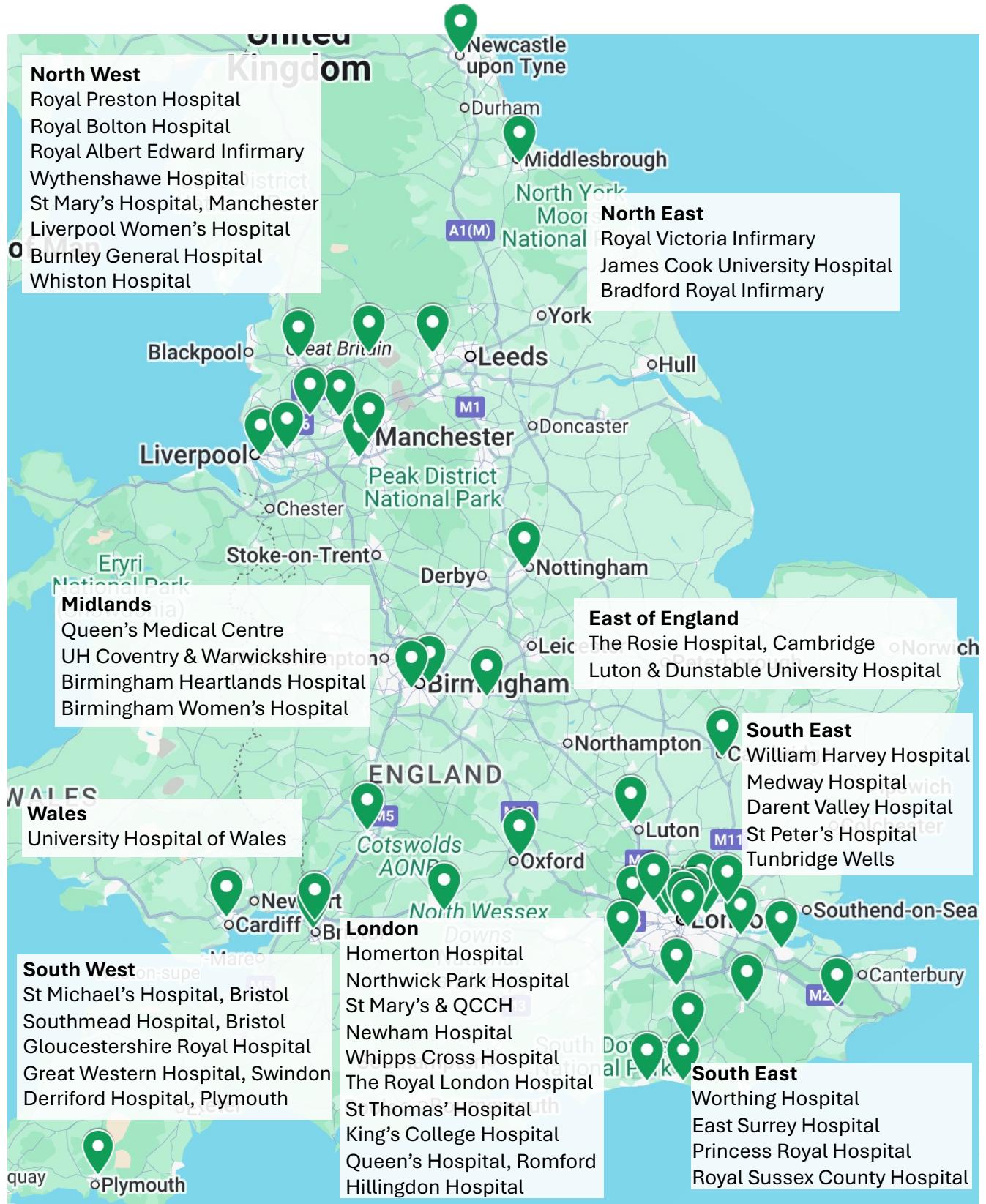
Parking: Free for all guests.

EV Charging: A BP Pulse 7 kW charging station is available at Basepoint Business & Innovation Centre (110 Butterfield Green Rd, LU2 8DL), a 1-minute drive / 4-minute walk from the Hotel.

50 rooms have been reserved and costs covered for all delegates

If you anticipate a late arrival, please inform the Luton Vale Hotel and COMET Trial Coordinating Team in advance.

Invited PI Network | 42 NHS Hospital sites





Cooling in Mild Encephalopathy (COMET)

Conference 2025

Site Principal Investigators Mandatory Residential Meeting

Active participation of each site's Principal Investigator is essential for successful recruitment into the COMET trial—a challenging but vitally important, time-critical neuroprotection study that will lay the groundwork for future trials in the UK and worldwide. Together, we will share experiences, review progress, and agree on next steps to ensure the COMET trial is delivered successfully.

IMPERIAL

First Neuro Exam

Please scan the QR code with your mobile phone before you do the the first neuro-examination.



COMET

COMET e-Screener

This QR code links to the COMET e-Screener, used by site teams to support eligibility screening in the trial. It will be discussed during the conference.

For any queries before the meeting, please contact the COMET Trial Coordinating Team at comet@imperial.ac.uk