

Some of our experiences.....

"I bonded with Sarah one evening when she was two weeks old. Up until this time, I had already fallen in love with my daughter, but it was not obvious that she knew who I was. I used to sing nursery rhymes to Sarah through the hatch in the incubator. I was always talking to her, singing, holding her hand, rubbing her leg. This was before Sarah was well enough to be held. One evening Sarah awoke and just stared into my eyes, we spent well over an hour just looking at each other. It was a very special time, that was the day Sarah and I bonded. From that time onwards she reacted differently to me than to the nurses and doctors. She always seemed happy to see me and reacted to me on sight. I learnt that there were several things I could do to interact with Sarah. I don't know whether she enjoyed my quiet singing (although I suspect that some of the nurses wished I would shut up from time to time), but she seemed to enjoy when I talked to her and showed her high contrast images. Very young babies like these images, you can buy little books with them, they are available from BIBS. When she came home she liked looking at shiny things, silver foil was her favourite. I wish I'd known that when she was still in hospital, as I would have made her a miniature mobile to look at."

If you need to talk to a member of BIBS, one of our supporters is in the parents room on a Wednesday evening from 8pm. Or call the dedicated answer phone and leave us a message, we will phone back a.s.a.p. Or e-mail us (via our website), a member of the committee will contact you. Social Baby Contrast Books are available from a BIBS supporter on request.

Babies in Buscot Support (BIBS) is a charitable organisation run on a volunteer basis by parents who have had children in Buscot Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU).

It exists to support parents and family of premature and sick newborn babies in the Reading area.

Our charity is devoted to:

- Supporting and encouraging the parents of premature and sick newborn babies
- Raising the awareness of special care babies and their needs
- Fundraising to provide the latest technology and equipment for Buscot ward to ensure that every special care baby has the best start in life possible



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Bonding with your baby in SCBU A Babies in Buscot Support guide to special care

Bonding with baby in SCBU



A guide to coping with babies in special care

What is bonding?

When experts talk about bonding, they are referring to the intense attachment parents develop with their baby, the feeling that makes you want to shower your baby with love and affection or when you know you would do anything to protect them. Parent-baby bonding is an individual experience and may occur within minutes or days of birth or may take much longer, all of which are normal.

How can you encourage bonding when your baby is in SCBU?

Simple, every day care is sometimes the easiest route to secure bonding, as soon as you are able to do so, the nurses will be encouraging you to help with washing, changing nappies etc., often called "all cares". Don't be afraid to touch and hold. skin-to-skin contact is very beneficial for parents and babies for many reasons and you should ask the nurses about "Kangaroo care". Talk to your baby as much as possible; remember your voice will already be familiar! Take some pictures as early as possible and keep these with you, some early snapshots are often taken by the nurses so you can still share the early days even if you are unable to visit SCBU immediately. If your baby is unable to take feed directly, try expressing breast milk (there is a breast pump room with a pump on Buscot). The expressed milk can then be fed to your baby. If you are intending to breast feed and your baby is ready to start taking sucking feeds, try putting him/her to the breast whenever possible even if at first he/she does not really feed yet. Instant success is not required - just trying the closeness and intimacy is a great step on the road to bonding for you both.

Remember that, though the doctors and nurses are giving medical care to your baby, you, as parents play a vital role.

Try to take part in decisions - even simple ones to help you feel like mum and dad and not just visitors. This could include choosing the baby's clothes for the day. Anything that helps you to feel closer to your baby.

When your baby is in SCBU you may feel that he does not really belong to you and this feeling may not change until you get home, but remember that the nurses change every shift but you, as parents are there all along.

Being with your baby

If your baby is well enough, it's good for you to get involved in his/her day-to-day care. Whether it's washing, nappy changing or feeding, it helps to feel useful. You may be able to cuddle your baby for short periods, but even if this is not possible for you, be assured that he/she will soon recognise you and your special touch. Remember that the doctors and nurses will change with each shift, but you are there solely for your baby. He/she will come to know this

And finally ...

This is precious time between you and your baby that can never be replaced. So whatever each day brings, cherish the time and hold it dear. Your baby needs you and you are there for him/her. That's all that matters.

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"Looking back I would find it hard to say when I bonded with my twin boys (born at 26 weeks), but I think it happened in stages.

The emotions that hit me when one of the twins was unwell and needed to go back into the hot room, are still difficult to describe, but I think that was when I realised what it really meant to me. Later at home, when we were alone as a family and the boys were sleeping in our arms, I recall the wave of love, affection and joy that just hit me out of the blue. I found myself with tears rolling down my face! (but that was several months after they were born)."

"I wanted to scoop her up and take her away from all the hurt that I could see all around her. Machines and wires did not fit the image of motherhood that I have had.

The fact that I had to leave her in Buscot was very distressing to me but didn't make me feel less of a mother. I began to take great comfort from the little things I could do for her - I used to wipe her dry skin with olive oil, and hold my hand near her face so that she could smell me. I even took to wearing a piece of cloth beneath my clothes so that I could leave it in her incubator, I thought that the familiar scent of me might bring her comfort. I talked to her constantly, sang nonsense songs and whiled away the weeks and months. We may not have lived under the same roof, but she felt like my daughter and I felt like her mum."