

Welcome to the Special Care Unit (SCU)

Neonatal Services
Tel: 01271 322610

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

Welcome to the Special Care Unit (SCU)

Congratulations on the birth of your baby. The birth of a baby usually brings great joy, but if your baby is premature, small or sick it can be a very worrying time.

In the Special Care Unit (SCU) of North Devon District Hospital we try to understand and anticipate your concerns. This Welcome Pack is designed to introduce you to the unit and to the specially trained nurses and doctors who will be caring for you and your baby.

There are photographs of all the SCU team as you enter the unit. Your baby will be allocated a nurse, who will be responsible for his/her care throughout that shift. We aim to tailor your baby's care to fit you and your baby's needs.

You can find the SCU on Level 2 in the Ladywell Unit – just follow the signs.

The telephone number for the SCU is **01271 322610**. This is a direct line for you to use at any time.

What is the Special Care Unit like?

The SCU is part of the South West Neonatal Network. There are 12 neonatal units linked together within this network and these are served by the Peninsula Neonatal Transfer Service. Some units can give more specialised care to your baby. It may be best that your baby receives part of his or her care in one of these other units especially if he/she is born very early or is very poorly. For more information, visit www.swneonatalnetwork.co.uk

We recognise that you are the most important part of your baby's life. We want you to feel involved in your baby's care as soon as you feel able. We will give you information about your baby and help you learn how to care for him/her. From the beginning we will encourage you to be involved in making decisions about your baby's care. Together we will plan your baby's day according to his/her needs and your daily circumstances.

Why is my baby in the SCU?

About one in 10 babies born in the UK are admitted to a SCU. As soon as the doctors have assessed your baby, we will explain his/her condition to you. We will keep you up to date at all times with your baby's progress. Any member of the team will be happy to answer questions you have about your baby's condition.

What is all the equipment for?

Whilst on the unit your baby may need monitoring equipment, which will sound an alarm to alert the doctors and nurses to any changes in your baby's condition. Please ask if you do not understand about the equipment that is being used.

When can I see my baby?

You can see your baby as soon as you feel ready. You and your partner are welcome to visit at any time and we encourage you to be here as much as possible. If you are not feeling strong enough to stand after the birth of your baby, you can visit in a wheelchair. We may be able to set up video calling so that you can see your baby whilst you are on delivery suite or the postnatal ward during the time you are unable to visit in person. Please ask your midwife or a nurse on special care if this is something you would like to do.

Visiting your baby

You (parents/carers) are welcome to visit at any time, and as much as possible. Brothers and sisters are very welcome too, but no other children may visit. All other visitors can visit at any time apart from 12-2pm where we run a 'quiet time'.

The unit is small and can get very busy, so we restrict the number of visitors to **two** at a time (in addition to parents). This is for fire, health and safety reasons and ensures that you and your baby have more space and privacy. Anyone who has been in contact with an infectious disease such as chickenpox, measles, coughs, colds, sore throat or diarrhoea is asked not to visit.

If your baby is very poorly you may not want other people to visit to allow you and your baby time to rest and be together, but this of course is up to you.

We will not allow anyone to visit your baby without your permission and if you are not present. Please let us know if there are others who can visit your baby when you are away. This can be written on the consent form.

Please respect the privacy of other parents and babies in the same room as you.

What should I do when I enter the unit?

We have small and vulnerable babies on the unit who are susceptible to germs and infection. Therefore we ask everyone who visits the baby to remove their outer coats/jackets and hang them up on the hooks provided outside of the special care nursery. On arrival and before going to your baby, please **wash your hands** thoroughly with warm water and soap at the sinks.

Is the unit secure and safe for my baby?

The unit is locked at all times. When visiting, please ring the bell at the entrance and confirm your identity. When the door is released for you, please enter but **do not let anyone in behind you** or try to go in behind anyone else.

This is for your baby's security. Every person must be identity checked before they come in to the ward. Please help us to keep the unit safe.

SCU is along the corridor on the first right after entrance to Caroline Thorpe Ward by the first orange square on the floor. Please ring the entrance bell and wait again for a second identity check.

If we cannot let you in immediately, please be patient as it will mean we are busy with a baby.

Your baby will wear two name bands on their ankles to identify them. If the name bands fall off, please alert a member of staff. Do not take them off.

Purple aprons are worn when we are calculating drugs. Please be mindful not to disturb us whilst we are wearing purple aprons. This is to ensure safe practice for the babies on the ward. Please be patient with us.

As the unit is very warm, we advise you to dress in light clothes.

If you have any health and safety concerns, please tell a member of staff.

Looking after your baby

The staff on SCU will help you learn how to care for your baby according to his/her condition and age. We will encourage you to do as much as you can to look after your baby. The nurses can support you to learn a number of skills ranging from taking your baby's temperature, giving medication and feeding them through their naso-gastric or oro-gastric tube if they have one, as well as others. We will support you to be your baby's primary carer whilst they are on the unit.

We also have staff on the unit who can support you to learn how to bath your baby and perform baby massage. Please ask your nurse if this is something you would like and we can arrange this for you.

Between us we can plan your baby's care to fit in with both his/her and your needs. We encourage you to be on the unit at nursing handover (7.30am – 8am and 7.30pm – 8pm) where we like to collaboratively discuss your baby's progress and plan of care for the shift at the cotside. We encourage and value your input into decisions about your babies care.

We will help you to learn all you need to know to confidently care for your baby at home. Just ask us if you feel unsure or need help.

Settling and comforting your baby

In the beginning your baby may be stressed and unable to settle because of the extra handling, lights, noise and smells. We will teach you to use special techniques and minimal handling of your baby to help them to get better and develop as he/she would in the womb. We will help you to learn how to settle and comfort your baby using these special techniques.

We try and keep low noise and light levels, and snuggle your baby using careful positioning. We offer Kangaroo Care or skin to skin, pain relief, positive touch and containment holding and we will teach you to use these too (see separate leaflets including: 'Caring for your premature baby – developmental care,' 'Positioning for premature babies,' 'Handle me with care' and 'Look at me I'm talking to you'). We will help you to learn how to settle and comfort your baby. Your nurse will help you to recognise your baby's cues and how to react to them.

He/she will soon get to know you by smell, so try not to put on too much scent. You may wish to put something clean that smells of you close to your baby when you leave him/her, for example a 'snuggly' or a breast pad. It is best for your baby if you do not smoke. If you can't give up, please do not smoke before you visit and please wear smoke-free clothing.

Feeding your baby

When your baby is born early or is unwell, he/she may be too small and tired to suck, breathe and swallow all at once. He/she may just need to sleep and grow. We would then have to feed him/her by naso-gastric or oro-gastric tube or by an intravenous infusion. Often we start milk feeds very slowly until we know your baby can digest them. We will support you to learn how to feed your baby through their naso-gastric or oro-gastric tube if this is something you would like to do.

Breast-feeding is the most natural way to feed your baby. Until your baby is able to feed from the breast, he/she can still have your expressed breast milk (EBM).

The 2-8-1 initiative

A member of staff will show you how to express your breast milk as soon as possible. This should be **within two hours** following delivery. You can do this where you feel comfortable, for example, Bassett Ward or on SCU, but the first time may be on Delivery Suite. We recommend following our **2-8-1** initiative; express within **two hours** following delivery at least **eight times** a day, including at least **once at night**.

If you have decided that you do not want to breast-feed your baby we would still ask you to express a little of your milk at the beginning whilst your baby is so vulnerable. This is so that he/she receives your protection against infection and the best start possible.

EBM is routinely checked by two people before each feed to make sure the milk is in date and that the right milk is given to the right baby. This is because EBM can carry blood borne viruses e.g. HIV so it is very important that your baby only receives your milk.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your EBM is labelled correctly so that your baby receives your milk. You may be asked to check your EBM with a member of staff; please ensure you are checking that it is your EBM and that it is in date before your baby receives it.

If your baby cannot have the milk immediately, it will be frozen – nothing is wasted! As soon as your baby's condition permits you will be able to start to use it.

Can I be discharged if I am breast-feeding?

Yes this is possible. Whilst we would encourage you to stay with your baby, we understand that this is not always possible. Staying with your baby can help increase your milk supply, supports bonding and also encourages your baby to feed. It has also been found to support your baby's brain development and improve emotional development. However, the ward can loan you a breast pump so that you can express your milk at home whilst your baby is on the ward. Please ask a member of staff about this.

Is it normal for me to feel so tired?

It is completely normal to feel tired, afraid, under-confident, irritable and stressed. Don't expect too much of yourself at first – your baby will need you to conserve your energy for later!

If everything gets on top of you and you need time out, don't feel guilty – tell us, we understand, and will try to help.

Why are you asking for my consent?

The mother automatically has parental responsibility for her baby. We will try to gain informed consent wherever possible for all procedures. Sometimes if you are not available, treatment may need to be started in your absence. We will always care for your baby assuming his/her best interest and explain the treatment to you as soon as possible.

We would also like to ask your permission to share information about your baby if necessary. For example the doctors may wish to review your baby's care and treatment with a neonatologist in another neonatal unit within our network to gain advice on his/her treatment.

Please read and sign our parent information leaflet about giving your consent.

Can my baby's stay on the SCU be used to help others?

We would like your permission to add your baby's details onto a computer system called Badger. All information is kept confidential. Your baby's details will then be used to help us improve our future care.

Will my baby stay on the SCU until he/she goes home?

If your baby has been born very early or needs specialised care then he/she may need to be transferred to another neonatal unit.

If your baby is feeding well but still needs some care from SCU staff, he/she may be able to stay with you on Bassett Ward.

What can I bring in for my baby?

You can bring in your own clothes/bedding and nappies etc if you wish. You may put pictures of yourselves and any brothers and sisters in the incubator or cot for your baby to look at. You are welcome to bring in up to two small washable toys to put by the incubator or cot.

Is there somewhere I can keep my personal belongings?

You can lock your personal belongings away in a locker. Please ask a nurse if you would like a key.

We suggest you do not bring in anything that is valuable. Do not leave anything valuable in your baby's cot. Keep all valuable items with you.

What facilities are there?

We encourage parents and siblings to be with their baby as much as possible as we realise this is a very special time for families and such a crucial time for bonding. We encourage you to stay with your baby in special care areas. If you would like to stay with your baby please speak to your nurse and we will try to arrange this where possible.

A toilet is available in the parent's room beside the lifts at the entrance to the ward. Wash and shower facilities can be accessed on Caroline Thorpe Ward or in the transitional care room.

We have a quiet room that is available for breast expressing, parent information, private 'family time out and play' or for waiting whilst your baby has a procedure e.g. X-ray.

A transitional care room is available for parents to use. This may be for breast-feeding, for staying overnight before going home, or just somewhere to get some 'time out'. This room has en suite facilities.

We have a few toys on the unit to amuse brothers and sisters, but please feel free to bring your child's favourite toy to help them feel at home during visiting.

Where can I get something to eat and drink?

There is a small kitchen area where you can get a drink at the entrance to the ward.

For safety reasons, please do not bring hot drinks on to the ward without a lid. Please keep hot drinks at a safe distance from your baby.

There is a shop on Level 2 in the main hospital which sells snacks, drinks, magazines, newspapers etc.

From Monday to Friday there is a snack trolley that comes to the ward twice a day selling drinks, sandwiches, snacks and newspapers.

For hot cooked meals and snacks

Food can be provided if you are staying all day on the SCU with your baby or are resident on the unit. Please ask staff for a menu card so that you can receive hot meals. These need to be completed and handed to staff before 7am so that food can be ordered for the day.

Visitors and parents are welcome to eat in the:

- Restaurant on Level 0 of the main hospital for breakfast, main meals and snacks.
Open from 8am to 2:30pm, Monday to Friday.
- Aspretto Cafe on Level 2 of the main hospital for hot and cold snacks.
Open from 8am to 7pm, Monday to Friday (hot meals after 5pm) and
from 10am to 7pm, Saturday and Sunday

Vending machines for snacks and meals

There is a vending machine for snacks and cold drinks on Level 1 of the Ladywell Unit. There is a hot drink and vending machine in Ladywell reception. Parents and family can purchase hot meal vouchers (24 hours a day) from the vending machine which you can give to a nurse, who can then prepare your meal. Please be aware there may be a delay if the ward is busy.

The small kitchen area in the parent's room may be used if you want to bring your own food. There is a small fridge for you to store your food and a microwave. If using the fridge, please label and date all your food to prevent any confusion. It is left there at your own risk.

What about transport and parking?

If your baby is admitted to the SCU parents are able to park in the main car park free of charge. You will need to get a ticket when you leave the hospital daily from the reception desk. This is just inside the main entrance of the hospital on Level 2. If there is no-one at the desk please ask the phone operators in the booths opposite.

There is a bus service that operates from Barnstaple Bus Station to the hospital, linking up with other routes. Time table advice can be found in the small kitchen area.

Am I entitled to any financial help?

If you are having financial difficulty travelling to the SCU, there may be help available if you are in receipt of certain benefits. For more information, ask a nurse for a HSCT form or go to the main hospital general office on Level 2.

Some parents are able to gain added help. Please ask staff for details.

Who else may be involved with the care of my baby?

Audiologist

If your baby spends more than 48 hours in the SCU, we will ask for your consent for the audiologist to check his/her hearing.

Physiotherapist

Some babies' conditions may require help from a paediatric physiotherapist.

Midwives

If your baby is less than 10 days old the midwife will still be involved in your care. She will then discharge you into the care of the health visitor.

Health visitors

If your baby is still on the SCU at 10 days old, we will contact your health visiting team to inform them that your baby is being cared for on the unit and update them on your baby's progress.

Social workers

If you are having difficulties and are worried about how you are going to manage, you may wish to contact a social worker. Please ask a nurse for more information or help.

Community neonatal and children's nurses

Some babies need extra support at home. If your baby needs support, a neonatal or children's nurse will visit you at home. You will be given an appointment and the nurse's contact details when you are discharged.

Chaplain

The hospital chaplain is available on request, or you may ask your own local minister to visit you and your baby.

When can I take my baby home?

Discharge-planning will begin as soon as your baby arrives in the SCU. Your nurse will organise this and work closely with you to prepare your baby for going home.

You can expect to take your baby home once he/she is off all monitors, keeping warm (in a normal cot), feeding normally (without a tube) and gaining weight.

How can I prepare to take my baby home?

Make sure you have all the equipment that your baby needs ready. Check that your home is safe and warm.

If you want to learn how to deal with your baby in an emergency, please just ask.

Before you go home, make sure that you know how to fix your car seat into the car and strap your baby into it safely.

When I take my baby home, will there be any follow-up and help?

An out-patient appointment to see the consultant paediatrician will usually be made for six weeks after discharge. Your baby might need appointments to see other specialists.

If your baby is discharged after 10 days old, we will contact your health visitor, who will visit your home. We will give you information about your baby's stay in the SCU and also send this to your doctor.

You and your baby may also be supported with visits at home from the neonatal outreach nurse.

If your baby is having any medicines, we will give you a week's supply and show you how to give them.

Where can I get more information?

The telephone number for the SCU is **01271 322610**. This is a direct line at any time.

If you have any questions about your baby and his or her condition, please do not hesitate to ask. Remember, we are here to help.

We have written leaflets available (help yourself to any on the stand) and books for you to borrow.

Further support and information is also available from:

BLISS the Premature Baby Charity

Freephone: 0500 618140

Email: information@bliss.org.uk

Website: www.bliss.org.uk/

The SCU has a BLISS champion who visits the ward to support parents.

Children's Centres

Children's Centre offer help and support to parents/carers. They can provide help with information on benefits, baby massage etc.

What about fundraising, gifts and donations?

Our staff are not able to accept personal gifts or gratuities, but we are happy to accept donations to Trust charitable funds which can then be used to purchase items for the unit. Please ask a member of staff.

Can I leave some feedback about my baby's stay in the SCU?

We will ask you to complete ward feedback information before you leave us. This is anonymous. The Trust collates all the comments to help us make changes to improve our care delivered to you.

If you are unhappy or anxious about your baby's care and treatment, please talk to a member of staff you have been dealing with or ask to speak to someone more senior. There are leaflets about this on the information stand. You can write or telephone the Customer Relations Manager, NDDH, Raleigh Park, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 4JB. Tel: 01271 322334.

If you would prefer to speak to someone not directly involved with your baby's care, you can contact a Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) officer on Level 2 or telephone 01271 314090, 9am – 4pm or email ndht.pals@nhs.net.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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