

# Bonding Squares

## Information for Parents and Carers



### **Bonding squares**

Bonding Squares are small pieces of soft material. They can be knitted, crocheted or just be bits of fabric cut into squares – 10cmx10cm is a good size for them. These squares can be used to encourage bonding between Mum/carer and baby, through sensory perception.

Once a baby has been admitted to the hospital, ward staff will contact Family Support and let us know so that we can come and visit to give Mum/carer these squares to keep. We will explain briefly how to use them but we will also give you this leaflet, as being admitted to hospital is a daunting time and it can be hard to take everything in all at once.

Family Support will be available throughout your hospital stay to help you through this difficult time in any way we can. We know that ward staff support parents as much as possible, but we are happy to lend you an additional hand of care and support.

### **How to use them**

Once you have your bonding squares, one will be placed beside your baby, as close to their skin as possible, and one should be kept with Mum/carer on her skin, so perhaps, for example, tucked under a bra strap or into a top.

Every 12 hours these should be swapped over, so baby is able to smell Mum/carer, and Mum/carer is able to smell baby. This should be done when skin-to-skin contact is not possible, or if Mum/carer has to spend any time away from her baby.

This can also be very helpful for breast-feeding Mums who have to/wish to express away from their babies. Having the smell of their baby close, or a picture, can help activate Mum's happy hormones, which will therefore make it easier to express her milk.

### **Skin-to-skin contact**

Skin-to-skin contact is the most effective way to bond with your newborn baby. This can usually be done immediately after birth but sometimes this is not possible, and could then be done by Dad or any other carer instead.

In these cases, Mum/carer can use the Bonding Squares until they can enjoy their amazing skin-to-skin contact again. Using Bonding Squares, could also improve Mum's supply of breast milk. The Bonding Squares, as an item reminding Mum of baby, as well as the smell of the baby, can help to activate the 'let down reflex'.

**If you have any questions about bonding, breastfeeding or expressing, please ask the staff to get in touch with Elaine from Family Support**