



## A helping hand from **Simpsons Special Care Babies**

Here to support the staff, families and babies of  
Edinburgh's Neonatal Unit



# Congratulations on the birth of your baby

We know that finding out that your little one will be spending time on the unit is difficult and you will probably have a lot of questions.

In this folder, you'll find lots of information about the Simpson Neonatal Unit, your stay and the care you'll receive provided by the NHS.

This booklet is specifically from Simpsons Special Care Babies (SSCB), the official charity supporting the Neonatal Unit. We hope it brings you and your family some comfort during your time here.

It's important to remember that the staff are here to care for your baby, and will be happy to answer any and all questions you might have.

(Don't be shy!)

## A bit about the unit

Around 50,000 babies are born every year in Scotland, and one in ten of these babies needs to be admitted to a Neonatal Unit. The Simpson Neonatal Unit cares for over 800 babies, from across the country, every year.

The length of time a baby spends in the unit can vary from baby to baby and can be as little as a few hours or as much as days to months.

During this time, you and your baby will be supported by the healthcare team.

The unit has a number of rooms providing different 'levels of care' depending on the needs of the baby.



# Simpsons Special Care Babies (SSCB)

Simpsons Special Care Babies (SSCB) is the official charity of the Simpson Neonatal Unit at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Our charity supports and supplements the wonderful service provided by the NHS by raising funds to help the sickest and smallest babies.

We are a voluntary organisation and are made up of a team of passionate volunteers whose babies have spent

time in the Neonatal Unit, consultants and healthcare professionals. We know just how important it is that this amazing place receives the best of everything; equipment that saves lives, staff training to develop specialist expertise and clinical research to improve lives. Importantly, you deserve a positive experience at what can be an incredibly difficult time and we understand what you are going through.



We have gathered together a bit of information that we, as parents, found useful.

If you'd like to find out more about the charity, share your story or donate, please get in touch with us. You can find out more on [sscb.org](https://sscb.org)

# Some of the ways we've helped

There are a few things that the charity support in the unit that we hope bring you some comfort during your stay.

As parents who have spent time in your position, we know what you are going through and there will be highs and lows during your time here.

## **vCreate**

vCreate is a secure (NHS approved) video and picture messaging service that allows you to receive video messages and photographs of your baby, and share them with family and friends. Originally funded by Simpsons Special Care Babies, this service was first used in Edinburgh in April 2020. The unit has supported hundreds of families in creating thousands of videos and photos of their babies.

## **Comfortable nursing chairs**

As you'll see, there are a number of large padded chairs in the unit. We know how important it is to have somewhere comfortable to sit when you're in the unit for long periods of time.

As you'll quickly come to learn, the staff are amazing. Not only will they give your baby the best care there is available, but we, as parents, can promise you that they will answer all of your questions – so please don't be afraid to ask them!



## Reading to your baby

We are all huge advocates of reading in the unit. Talking, reading and singing to your baby comforts them and will also help you bond.



“

I remember calling my mum frantically and asking her to bring in some books as we didn't have any in the unit. Reading to the boys far exceeded our expectations in the support it brought us as parents, but also the comfort it gave our boys hearing our voices. It felt a bit alien at first, reading aloud, but we quickly got used to it.”

– Gemma, mum of Jack and Ryan

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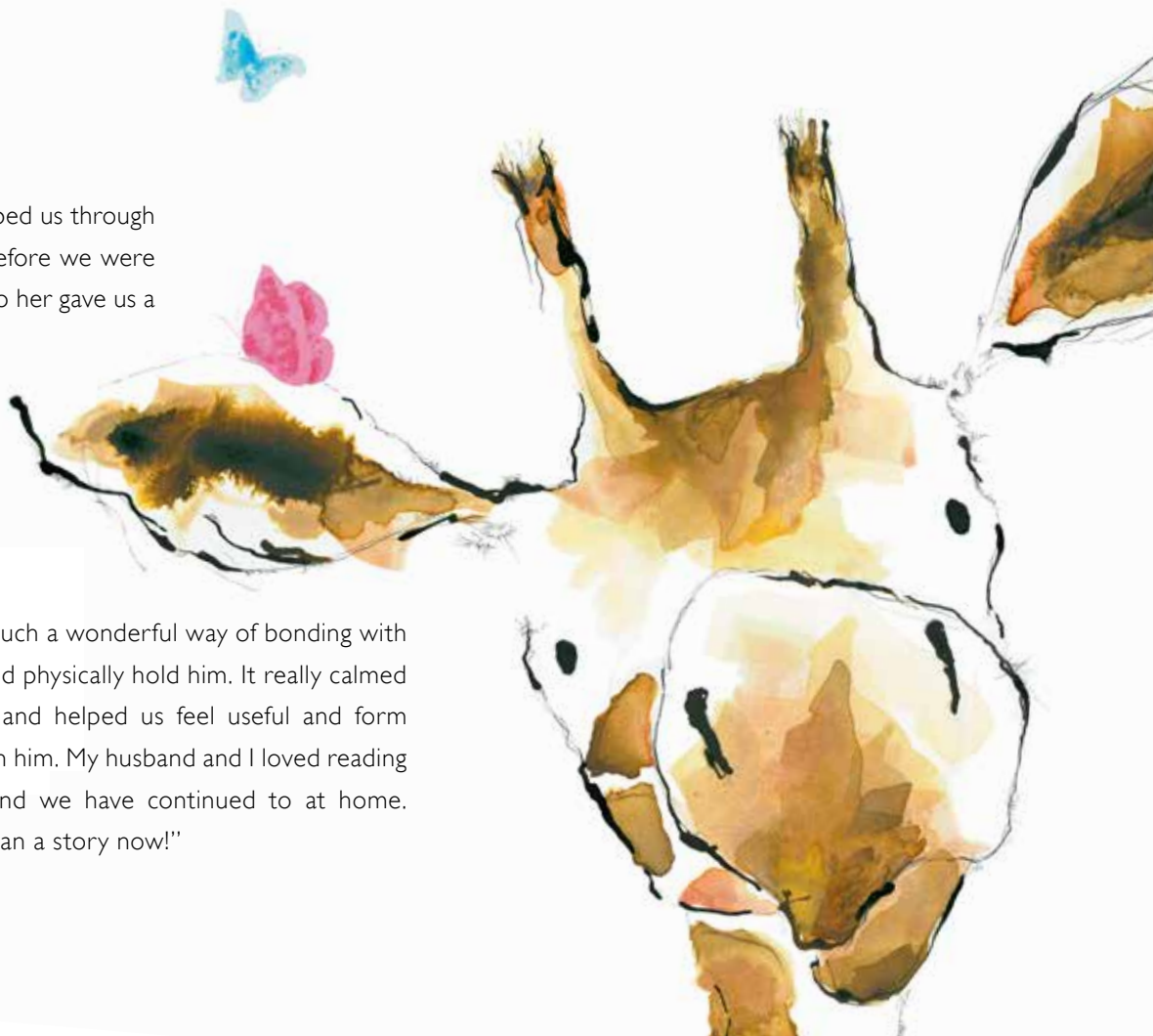
Reading to Elise really helped us through it all. We felt that even before we were able to hold her, reading to her gave us a way to bond with her.”

– Steve, dad of Elise

“

Reading to my baby was such a wonderful way of bonding with my little boy before I could physically hold him. It really calmed him to hear our voices, and helped us feel useful and form more of a connection with him. My husband and I loved reading to Fredrik in the unit, and we have continued to at home. He loves nothing more than a story now!”

– Olivia, mum of Fredrik





## Some tips from other parents

We've gathered together some hints and tips from other parents who have spent time on the Neonatal Unit that we hope might help you and bring you comfort at this challenging time in your life.

“

Talk to other parents in the unit. Your friends and family probably won't have a clue about the thousand confusing and exhausting emotions you are feeling.

Talk to mums in the expressing room, in the cots next to yours and in the hallways, they know exactly how your feeling. I was lucky enough to meet some mums during my first neonatal experience. The oldest in our group of seven kids is about to turn two and we speak every day. I wouldn't have made it through without them!"

– Shannon, mum of Fraser, born at 31 weeks weighing 4lbs

“

Don't be afraid to ask questions and seek out support from family and friends whenever you can . Rest and eat well - it's so important for mums and dads to take care of yourself and each other - it's an exhausting time, physically & emotionally. Trust the wonderful staff at Simpsons - they are outstanding and determined to do everything they can to help our precious babies get home where they belong."

– Fiona, mum of Sandy, born 29 weeks weighing 3lbs

“

Get plenty rest yourself. It's a very emotional journey - talk to the nurses about anything that's on your mind, don't bottle it up. Also if you're still on the ward, don't be afraid to ask to go see your baby in the middle of the night. I was wheeled down in my bed at 2am because I couldn't settle, it was amazing just laying beside the incubator."

– Oriana, mum of Noah, born at 35 weeks weighing 6lbs 1oz



“

You can't pour from an empty cup and having some 'me time' is not selfish but essential to keep your physical and mental health. Go for a long bubble bath, get a massage or go for a coffee with a friend. The staff will take good care of your wee one and you'll come back refreshed."

– Joanne, mum of Ellis, born at 29+6 weighing 3lbs 4oz

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Don't feel guilty when its time to head home.  
Your baby is in the best hands possible.”

– Alison, mum of Jamie, born at 28 weeks  
weighing 2lbs 9oz



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Ask, ask and ask again if in doubt or you have  
questions. Take time to speak to your child.  
Be their motivation and let them be yours.  
Each journey is different and the staff are there  
for you and always ready to listen.”

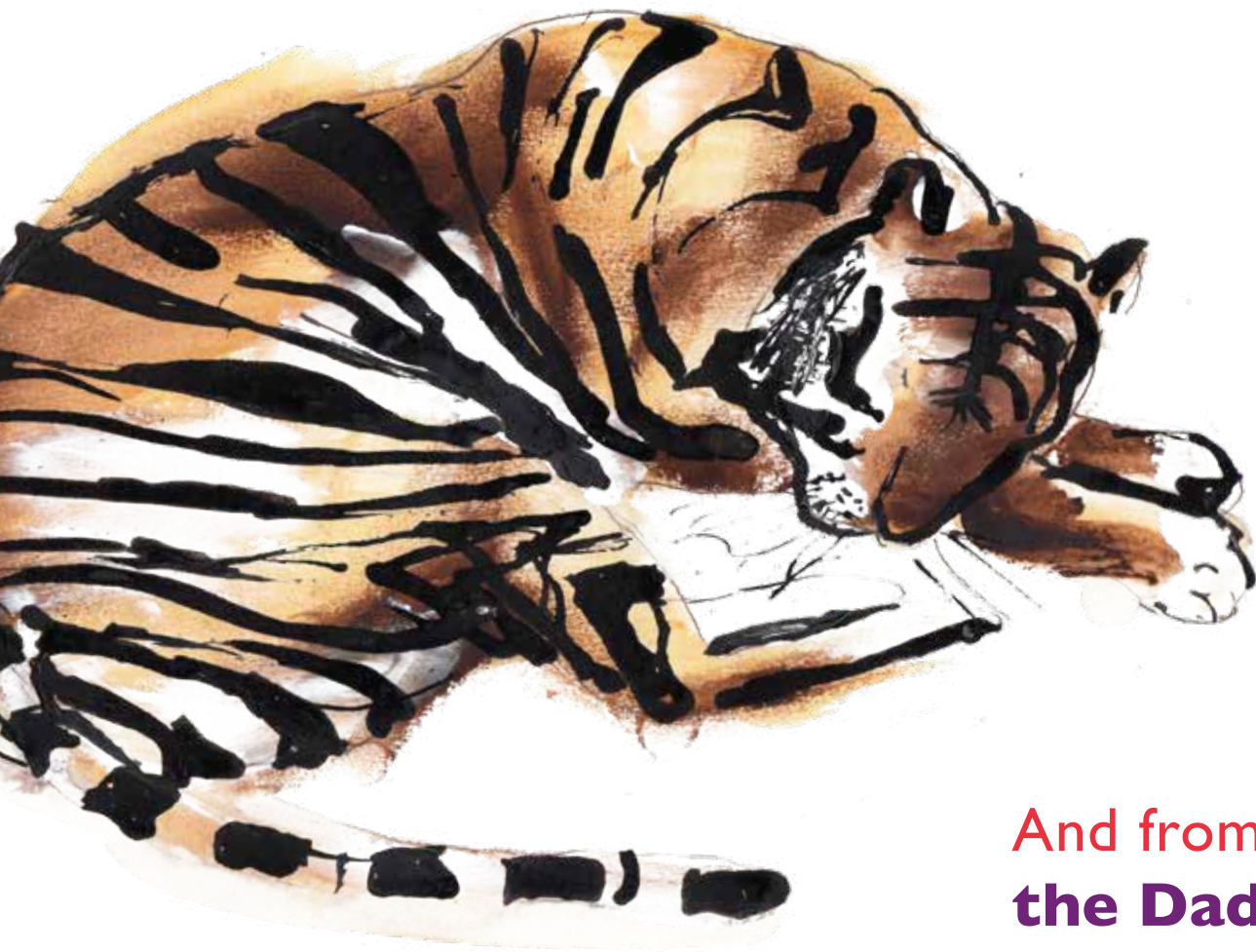
– Estelle

“

It's normal to have bumps in the road  
and baby's progress isn't always linear.

Take things one day at a time and  
look after yourself.”

– Clare, mum of Sadie born at  
34 weeks weighing 4lbs 12oz



And from  
**the Dads...**

“ First tip... Never underestimate the human capacity to adapt. You might have a long journey ahead of you but don't worry so much about how you'll cope... you will cope. You'll find strength in yourself, draw strength from your child's amazing will to survive and thrive. You'll also have an amazing team of professionals around you to help as well.

Second tip... do what you can to remember the details. As the years pass, this episode becomes a shrinking part of your child's life, but it is so important. Being able to give details to underline why your child is so amazing when they're old enough to understand is invaluable.

Final tip... ask all the questions that come to you, and if you don't understand the answer then ask again. At the end of all of this you'll sleep more soundly if you know the decisions you had to make were fully informed.

You need to find a balance with this... in my case, the senior staff had to help me rebalance a bit, which they did with tact.

Final, final tip... breathe a little easier knowing that your child could not possibly be in better hands anywhere in the world... super Simpsons!”

– Barry, dad of Matthew, born at 24+5 weighing 1 lb 9oz

“ Some years ago, I was reading this book, “The Flounder”, which is somewhat of a big volume of a book.

And someone asked me “how do you manage to read such a long story like that?” My answer: the same way you read a short story, one page at a time.

I recalled this anecdote many years later, when I arrived to the unit and I was told my daughter had, most likely, Necrotising Enterocolitis - for the 3rd time in a few months.

This is something I now tell myself every single day of my life: one page at a time.”

– Valter, dad of Amelia,  
born 25+4 weighing 1 lb 6 oz

# Other resources you might find helpful

## **Family stories**

We have lots of family stories on our website. Parents have shared their experiences with us and this may give you some comfort. You are not alone.

[sscb.org/families](https://sscb.org/families)



## **Scottish Book Trust**

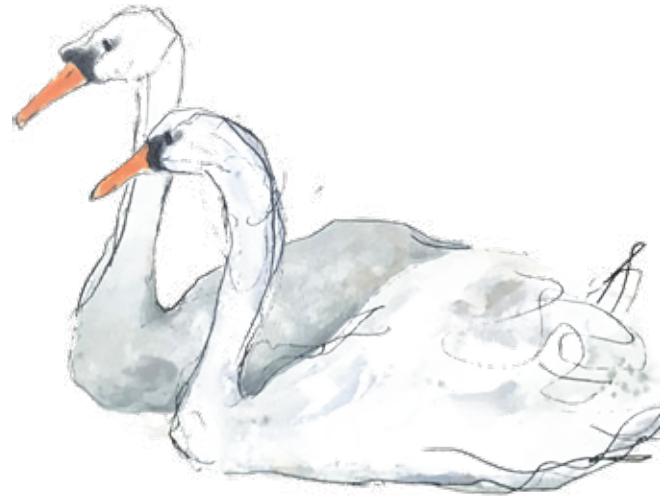
Talking, reading and singing is so important and will comfort and soothe your baby. You can find out more about the importance of reading to your baby on the Scottish Book Trust website.

[scottishbooktrust.com](https://scottishbooktrust.com)



# Get in touch on social media

You can find us on social media too. Lots of parents have shared their experiences, and you'll find lots of inspiring and comforting stories on our pages from others who have spent time in the unit over the decades.



## Facebook



## Twitter



## Instagram



# Checklist



There is a bit more practical information that you might find useful during your stay on the unit.

To find out more, please ask a member of the team who will be happy to help you.

## **Visitor passes**

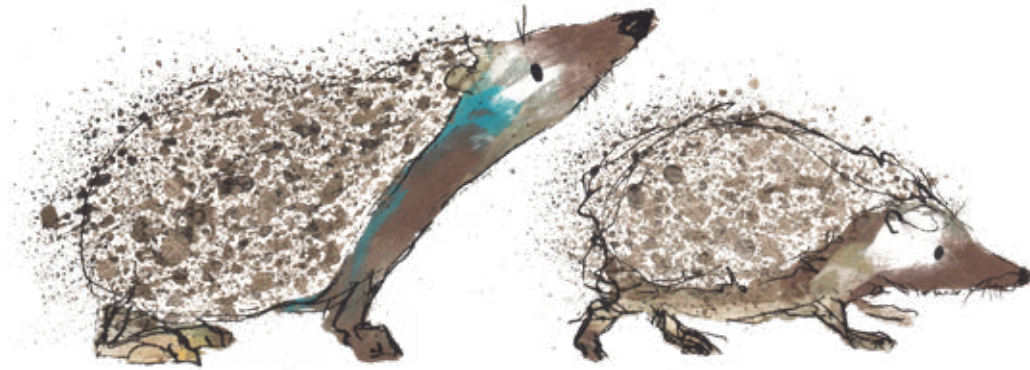
The team at the unit will tell you everything you need to know about having visitors at the unit.

## **Hospital carpark vouchers**

Remember to ask your Neonatal Nurse about reduced carpark.

## **Breast pump loan**

The Neonatal Unit have a number of hospital grade pumps which they are able to loan out to mothers and babies in their unit. Ask your Neonatal Nurse for more information.



### **Expenses claim form**

If you're the parent or guardian of a premature or sick newborn baby in a Neonatal Unit, you can claim for the costs of travel and food.

Visit [mygov.scot/neonatal-expenses-fund](https://mygov.scot/neonatal-expenses-fund) or ask at reception for more details.

### **Milestone cards**

SSCB has funded some beautiful milestone cards to help you mark your baby's progress. Please ask your Neonatal Nurse where to find these.

### **vCreate picture and video messaging**

SSCB originally funded the secure picture and video messaging service. You might find this reassuring and helpful. Ask your Neonatal Nurse for more information.

And remember, if you'd like to find out more about **Simpsons Special Care Babies (SSCB)**, please ask a member of staff or visit [sscb.org](https://sscb.org)



All illustrations by  
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