

## What happens to the information I share with the family support worker?

The family support worker is a member of the multidisciplinary team and communicates regularly with colleagues in NICU to provide the best care for families.

If there is reason to think that there is a risk of harm to you or others, this information may need to be passed on to other professionals. The family support worker will talk to you about this first whenever possible. If there is something that you tell the family support worker that you do not want them to share with anyone other than their supervisor, please let them know. We will always try to make sure that that information is then kept private or "confidential".

### Psychological Health Services

For access to other patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:

[www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-visitors-and-carers/patient-information.html](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-visitors-and-carers/patient-information.html)



**Hospital Switchboard: 0117 923 0000**

**Minicom: 0117 934 9869**

**[www.uhbristol.nhs.uk](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk)**



For an Interpreter or Signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in Large Print, Braille, Audio, or Email, please call the Patient Information Service: 0117 342 3728 / 3725



## Families in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)



## **Why is there a family support worker in NICU?**

We know that having a baby admitted to NICU can be a very stressful time for families. The family support worker aims to reduce the stress that families may experience in NICU by giving emotional support and supporting the bonding process through what is often a very difficult time.

## **What are common experiences for parents whose babies are admitted to NICU?**

Parents are usually very worried when their baby comes to NICU. They often tell us that it is difficult to be separated from their baby and they may feel they are not in control of events. It can be hard to feel “like a parent” when other people are involved in looking after your baby and the normal bonding process can be more challenging. It can be physically and emotionally exhausting if your baby has to stay for a prolonged period of time, especially when there are a number of other demands on you, such as other children to care for. People sometimes find it difficult to absorb all the complex medical information, get used to the hospital environment, and familiarise themselves with the staff and the speed at which this moves and changes can feel overwhelming. Many of the familiar routines of normal daily life are disrupted. Understandably, fears about the future often occupy parents’ minds.

## **How can the family support worker help me?**

At times, it becomes clear during pregnancy that a baby will need to come to NICU after birth, and the family support worker will then meet with the parents to introduce them to the unit. Otherwise, once a baby is in NICU the family support worker will introduce herself to you or you can ask another member of staff if you would like to meet with her. The family support worker

aims to make sure you feel well informed about your baby’s care and about other practical issues such as accommodation, breastfeeding advice and maternity care.

During your child’s stay in NICU, the family support worker will meet with you frequently and link with other staff members to ensure that you are involved in your child’s care. The family support worker can also offer you individual sessions for more in-depth emotional support if you feel this would be helpful; this can give you the time and space to explore your feelings and make sense of them. The family support worker can also help you to develop further strategies for dealing with difficult emotions.

## **What other roles does the family support worker have within the NICU team?**

The family support worker helps to ensure that all NICU staff have a good understanding of the emotional responses and needs of parents and that they have the skills to communicate effectively and provide emotional support. This includes providing formal training and supporting staff to reflect on their work, so that new developments and any concerns can be discussed and acted on quickly.

## **How many days per week does the family support worker work in NICU?**

The family support worker works three days a week in NICU. In addition, there is a sister on the ward who dedicates one day a week to supporting families.