## Guidance for conversations in pregnancy

### Saying ‘hello’ to your baby can start today

Starting to form a relationship with their baby during pregnancy is helpful to parents in many ways; it supports the transition to parenthood and lays the foundations for a strong and loving bond. Lots of mothers to be / couples do this instinctively. You can support this by encouraging a woman to take time out every day to relax, stroke her baby bump and talk to her growing baby. Encourage fathers to be involved wherever possible.

### A warm welcome after birth

Ask mothers-to-be what they already know about skin contact e.g. Do they know that it’s a lovely way for all mothers to welcome a new baby and that it will help to calm them both? Discuss how skin contact encourages a surge of mothering hormones which helps form a close bond with their new baby.

### Having conversations with your baby from day one

Ask mothers-to-be about what they already know about how babies develop and what they need to feel secure. Share information about how their baby’s brain will grow and the importance of responsive parenting to encourage healthy brain connections and feelings of safety and security. Encourage mothers-to-be (and fathers) to think about the needs of their new baby for physical and emotional closeness and comfort. Explain that it is not good for babies to be left to cry and that responding to a baby’s needs will not ‘spoil’ them, but will help them feel safe and secure. Listen to any concerns she may have or doubts she may be feeling. Reassure mothers-to-be that their instincts will prompt them to do this and encourage them that being responsive is a good thing.

Point out that keeping their baby close helps mothers learn to notice and respond to their baby’s needs for comfort and feeding, making life easier.

### Feeding your baby

Ask what the mother to be already knows about breastfeeding. Find out about her feelings and expectations about breastfeeding. It’s important to accept thoughts and feelings, women can so easily feel judged or preached at. Listen first, take time to understand any worries she may have and then give relevant information. Help her to appreciate the value of breastfeeding as food, comfort and protection for her baby.

Remind her that staff will be around to help her get feeding right in the early days and why this is important. If appropriate, remind her that she does not have to decide about feeding now, she can wait until her baby is in her arms.