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## **LITTLE GREEN SHEEP COUNTING ON SUCCESS FOR THE SNUZPOD**

The Little Green Sheep, the Worcestershire-based natural baby bedtime company, has secured a £200,000 finance package from HSBC to support the growth of the business, including the launch of its SnüzPod 3-in-1 Bedside Crib.

The SnüzPod has been in development for the past two years and attaches to the side of the parents' bed, enabling mothers and fathers to easily bond and feed their newborn baby without the dangers of bed-sharing. The product, which is a 3 in 1 design that also encompasses a removable Bassinet and a standalone crib, was launched in December and debuted in 46 Babies "R" Us stores in March.

The Little Green Sheep was founded in 2007 by Mark Nicholls and Paul Maurice, both 29, who met whilst studying at Aston University. Mark had worked in the baby market for the likes of Johnson & Johnson and Kerry Foods, and spotted a gap in the market for high quality, chemical free baby mattresses manufactured from organic and natural materials, whilst Paul specialised in sales.

The company has secured a finance package from HSBC's Birmingham Commercial Centre, in a deal led by International Commercial Manager Martyn Drayton, that includes a trade finance facility to support the import of the SnüzPod product from China and invoice finance to accelerate sales to trade purchasers. Turnover has doubled in the past 12 months to £882,000 and the company expects to hit sales of £1.6 million this year.

The finance has been secured from HSBC's £500 million West Midlands SME Fund, launched to help businesses from the region with a turnover of up to £30 million achieve growth.

The Little Green Sheep designs all of its products from its base in Stockwood, Worcestershire, and manufactures its products in the UK, Turkey and China. The SnüzPod complements the company's existing product range, which includes mattresses (made from organic cotton, coconut fibres, fleece wool and natural latex), bedding and accessories, sleepwear and baby bath products. The company sells direct to consumers and also wholesale via independents retailers and multiples such as Mothercare, Amazon and The White Company.

Managing Director Mark Nicholls said: "I developed the idea for The Little Green Sheep whilst at my previous employer and visiting baby retailers, where I was surprised at the lack of innovation and, in some cases, quality in the market. I decided that parents could benefit from a brand that concentrated solely on offering products focussed to the baby's needs, with the peace of mind for parents of no added chemicals.

"Our range has developed from there and the SnüzPod is something we are extremely excited about as we don't believe there is a product on the market that matches it for quality and design. Our research shows that nearly three quarters of parents bed share with their new born baby, despite over half of those being aware of the dangers of doing so. The product has only just been introduced to the market but the feedback has been superb and we are excited to see it nationwide in Babies "R" Us stores. The next step for the business is to look at cots and see what innovation we can bring to that area, whilst we would also like to develop international sales."

Roy Harris, HSBC Midlands Regional Commercial Director, added: "The SnüzPod is a truly fantastic product, which I am sure will benefit parents as much as the baby. Mark and Paul are two young entrepreneurs who had the conviction to launch a premium baby brand in tough economic conditions, but they have made great inroads and we are pleased to have supported them with this finance package."

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