



For Baby's Sake

Winner of the Family Learning to Support Early Years Award

The [For Baby's Sake Trust](#) is a charity dedicated to breaking cycles of domestic abuse and giving babies the best start in life through their therapeutic support programme, For Baby's Sake. The programme began in 2015 and was designed to address the impact of domestic abuse on families, with a strong focus on parent-infant relationships. Delivered from pregnancy up until a child's second birthday (0-2), their award-winning programme provides long-term, trauma-informed support to create lasting change.

The main objectives of the programme are to enhance parent-infant bonding in families where domestic abuse is present, reducing the risk of harm to the child and parents. This aligns with the organisation's wider goals of breaking cycles of domestic abuse across the UK.

Family Learning Early Years: For Baby's Sake

Working with around 200 parents per year, For Baby's Sake is the first programme for expectant parents that takes a whole-family approach, starting in pregnancy and identifying the entire cycle and history of domestic abuse.

Both parents join For Baby's Sake, whether they are a couple or not. Each has their own different practitioner, allowing parents the time, space and support to tackle often complex and daunting issues from their own lives. Practitioners also work closely with each other and with multi-agency partners to manage risks within each family member's journey.

Through their work with parents of babies aged 0-2, the team aims to help them develop emotional regulation, reflective functioning, and attuned parenting behaviours. By working with both parents separately but in parallel at this crucial early stage, they contribute to the broader strategy of reducing the number of babies entering care.

The programme follows the core UCL outcomes for children and uses clinically approved measurement scales. For Baby's Sake supports parents to strengthen bonding and attachment with their baby, even in difficult situations, such as when domestic abuse is present in the relationship.



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For Baby's Sake works intensively with both parents, using evidence based therapeutic approaches to enhance parental capacity, emotional safety, and infant wellbeing. The programme aligns with the three characteristics of effective learning:

- Playing and exploring: Through Video Interaction Guidance (VIG), parents watch and reflect on filmed interactions with their baby, helping them notice positive moments of connection and build on them.
- Active learning: Parents engage in structured modules like 'Where's the Baby?', where they explore their baby's emotional needs, and 'Inner Child', which helps them process past trauma to parent more positively.
- Creating and thinking critically: Parents reflect on their behaviours and decision-making, supported by practitioners who help them develop new, healthier ways of responding to challenges.

Over 80% of the parents currently participating in For Baby's Sake experienced emotional neglect which is typical of the cohort. They want to give their baby the best start in life and rely on the empowering support and information that the programme provides. In particular, parents often seek guidance on how to play with their children, as their parents and carers did not play with them. The team builds playfulness within the parents and also introduces them to key techniques, notably how to follow their baby's lead and use techniques such as 'serve and return' which build communication and social skills.

A key therapeutic principle is PACE, 'Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy', which facilitates the child's ability to establish a secure attachment with their caregiver. The aim is to ensure that the child establishes a feeling of safety, the springboard of family life and human development and the foundation of attachment theory. For children who have experienced acute, intense fear, pain or abuse their sense of safety is impaired and they are at risk of developing a traumatic response.

Alongside For Baby's Sake's direct work with families, the team have produced strengths-based trauma insight resources for professionals to use – one related to working parents and one related to working with children. The parents' tool and guidance includes an explanation of PACE and why it is key to how parents can support their babies' and children's emotional regulation and emotional, social and communications development. Through these approaches, For Baby's Sake empowers parents to see their baby's perspective, respond with sensitivity, and create safer environments.

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Impact and next steps

"If I'm honest, if I wasn't on this programme, I'd probably be in prison by now. I certainly wouldn't be in a relationship with my partner, and I probably wouldn't have a relationship with my daughter. This programme has completely turned my life around."

From April 2023 – March 2024, the programme was delivered to 205 families, reaching 774 individuals (parents, babies and other family members). Over the last 10 years, For Baby's Sake has provided long-term, trauma-informed therapeutic support to over 700 families, positively impacting more than 2,600 family members and enhancing the lives of over 700 babies and over 500 other children.

The For Baby's Sake Trust has collaborated with academics, public health, and other sector leads to develop how it measures domestic abuse and infant development outcomes. They collect a high volume of qualitative data, including parents' feedback.

For some parents, this is the first time they have been able to keep their baby:

"[Our baby] has had the best start in life. I wish we had For Baby's Sake years ago...maybe then my other children would be with us."

This programme is transformative for families involved, providing them with tools and insights they would not otherwise have access to.

