



One minute guide

Baby Steps

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What is Baby Steps?

Baby Steps is an evidence-based perinatal (the early transition to parenthood) group education programme for families with additional needs and at risk of poor outcomes. Examples of families who might benefit from the programme include parents who: are young; have experienced domestic abuse; have been in the care system; misuse alcohol or drugs; have low level mental health needs; lack strong social networks; or are recent migrants, asylum seekers or refugees.

The overall purpose of the programme is to increase support available during pregnancy and the first few months of life; and to prepare parents not only for the birth of their baby, but also their own transition to parenthood.

The [NSPCC](#) worked with Warwick University to develop the Baby Steps programme which is based on the Department of Health's '[Preparation for Birth and Beyond](#)' framework for antenatal education.

What does the Baby Steps programme involve?

The Baby Steps programme begins with a home visit, and then parents attend six weekly group sessions before the baby is born, followed by three more after the birth.

The programme is based on the latest theory and research and focuses on building positive relationships between parents and their baby, as well as between the parents themselves.

The programme is jointly delivered by a health practitioner (a midwife or health visitor) and a children's services practitioner (family support worker or social worker). The skills mix of these different practitioners is important to enable the programme to deal effectively with families' emotional, social and physical needs.

However, the approach of the Baby Steps facilitators is just as important as their professional knowledge and skills. Facilitators develop mutually respectful, valued relationships with parents, which enable them to benefit fully from the programme and to model the secure relationships they can create with their child.

The programme is very interactive and delivered through a range of engaging approaches, including discussions, creative activities and film. It covers the topics that parents expect from traditional antenatal education, such as birth, breastfeeding and practical baby care.

What key themes does the programme focus on?

The programme focuses on the key themes that reflect the importance of protective factors in the perinatal period:

- Strengthening parent-infant relationships;
- Strengthening couple relationships;
- Building strong support networks;
- Improving feelings of self-confidence as well as levels of low mood and worry; and
- Helping parents to understand babies' development.

Why do we have Baby Steps

For babies, the perinatal period is a time of incredible growth, which will shape their later development and influence wellbeing. For parents, it is also a time of significant adjustment, as well as potential stress. The perinatal period is the time when the foundations for a family are laid. Without firm foundations, problems for parents and their children are more likely to emerge further down the line.

Fortunately, the perinatal period is a time when parents report being open to support, and as expectant mothers receive a lot of professional contact, it is considered an opportune time to implement prevention programmes. Many disadvantaged parents-to-be, who are most likely to need support, are less likely to access antenatal education or support over and above their standard midwife care.

What do we have in Leeds and who are the key contacts?

In Leeds we have a multi-disciplinary team consisting of children's services practitioners, social workers, midwives and health visitors who deliver the Baby Steps Programme in children's centres across the city.

Referrals are received from midwives, social workers and other practitioners who work with mothers and fathers to be.

The home visit is often the best way to establish whether the programme will meet the pregnant woman and her partner's needs and is a good starting point to build effective relationships.

If you want to discuss a referral or find out more about the programme please call the Baby Steps team on: 0113 3788533 or email: BabySteps@leeds.gcsx.gov.uk