



One minute guide

Baby Steps

No. 117, July 2021

What is Baby Steps?

Baby Steps is an evidence-based perinatal (the early transition to parenthood) education and support programme for new parents who are more likely to need extra help and less likely to access antenatal education.

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

Baby Steps is a licensed programme developed by the NSPCC and Warwick University and is based on the Department of Health's ['Preparation for Birth and Beyond'](#) framework for antenatal education.

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.

What does the Baby Steps programme involve?

The Baby Steps programme involves a home visit, six weekly group sessions before the baby is born, then three more sessions after the birth.

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 relationships.

The programme is jointly delivered by a health practitioner (a midwife or health visitor) and a children's services practitioner (family support worker). The Baby Steps facilitators develop mutually respectful, valued relationships with parents in a group setting. They use their professional knowledge and skills to support and empower families to model secure relationships parents can create with their child and meet emotional, social and physical needs.

The programme is interactive and delivered through a range of engaging approaches, including discussions, creative activities and films.

What key themes does the programme focus on?

The programme covers topics such as preparing for birth, breastfeeding and practical baby care and focuses on 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;
- Helping parents to understand babies' development.

Why do we have Baby Steps

Pregnancy and the first months of a child's life are crucial and lay the foundations for their future. Without firm foundations, problems for parents and their children are more likely to emerge.

For parents, it is also a time of significant adjustment, as well as potential stress. Fortunately, parents report being open to support during the perinatal period. It is therefore an opportune time to implement prevention programmes which enhance universal midwifery 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, 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.

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.gov.uk.