

Babies1st Annual report April 21 – March 22



Company number 11966138
www.babies1st.net

This last year Babies1st has managed to continue to thrive and reach more families and professionals in the community.

Our Response to the Pandemic

We were aware of parents' isolation at home with their new babies, so we offered online groups to support those who either were afraid or struggled to leave the house with their babies. These groups were small, but important to these new families, who included those with postnatal depression, separated from their wider family network including elderly parents. They were helped to express their increased anxieties, and isolation. They included a parent with twins, and a parent with mental health problems. All suffered from the impact of the pandemic.

Three of our senior Babies1st practitioners delivered these groups pro bono a total of 4 blocks or 18 online Baby Bonding group sessions, attended by 10 dyads. The feedback from all parents was extremely positive, and they appreciated the connections they made with other parents and Babies1st practitioners, which otherwise would not have happened.

Training local volunteers

Our ethos is to train practitioners in Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) and to make VIG available to all parents and babies who want this, to encourage attuned parenting and support the development of parental confidence.

We currently have 3 volunteer practitioners, who are offering VIG under supervision of Babies1st. We provided 34 hours of individual client contact, reaching 3 families (one of them high need).

Creating grassroots initiatives

We have been training 2 local volunteers in Oxford, one of them a mother, who previously attended our Baby Bonding groups, to now themselves facilitate a group for parents and babies under the umbrella of Babies1st. This new initiative has been established in collaboration with a local children centre. The volunteers' work will be actively supported by Babies1st and supervised by our senior practitioners.

Community Building

Following an emergency referral by Wexham Park hospital to support a mother who had been moved out of their area, we came across Saunderton Lodge, a temporary housing project in Buckinghamshire, where residents, many of them with great challenges, such as mental health problems, domestic violence, debts etc have been housed. We discovered that no support was offered to these families, many of them having children under five. We started to forge links with the managers of Saunderton Lodge, and the residents. Due to the temporary nature of the accommodation, we needed to be flexible and adjust, working with whoever was present at the time, and open to receive help.

Since January we spent 62 hours setting up, liaising and engaging the community of staff and families, some of whom with very complex needs. We reached and contacted a total of

10 families. We provided 4 families so far with VIG interventions. This demonstrates the many hours needed to engage a population, which is transient, often traumatised, not trusting of services, and with complicated disorganised lives. However, it is exactly these families who need most help and who easily fall through the gaps of service provisions. A small grant from the National Lottery allows us to continue this project which until now had been delivered pro bono.

Up-skilling parents and building bridges

We are encouraging some of the parents, whom we engaged and who have moved on from the temporary housing complex into the community, to continue attending the Baby Bonding groups. This will allow us to continue our relationships and provide a bridge between the temporary housing and the families' new start, often in a new location, where they can be quite isolated. We are liaising with their professional network at every step, therefore also raising Babies1st profile and strengthening the professional systems surrounding the parents. These families are also encouraged to act as peer supporters.

Empowering Professionals and engaging hard to reach Families

A grant from What Works for Children Social Care has enabled us to provide 21 professionals from 4 Local Authorities children services and children centres with an Introduction to VIG. They were either social workers or family workers; they continued to provide VIG interventions to highly vulnerable 'hard to reach' families in their communities. 13 Professionals so far have graduated to their Midpoint Review, the halfway stage of their VIG training. 103 hours have been spent supervising these professionals by experienced senior VIG trainers; This work and the training is still ongoing.

Raising awareness to early years and our contribution

We ran ten training events, such as presentations for the Association of Infant Mental Health, Using VIG during Pregnancy and with Couples, problem solving of technology challenges and editing skills. We presented Babies1st work to Wexham Park Hospital, Stockport Local Authority Learning Circle, the Chalfont St Peter Baptist Church Neighbourhood Hub; and delivered Training days to facilitate Parent infant groups to perinatal mental health services. We are also organising the celebration of Infant mental health awareness week this year with a best practice sharing event.

Updating technology, policies and organisational structures

We updated our website to include a professional page in addition to the parent information. We have strengthened and consolidated our organisational policies to become robust and comprehensive. One of the mothers, who 'graduated' from our Baby Bonding group is now a member of our steering group.

Report prepared by



Monika Celebi
Clinical Director
31/03/2022