

Baby Steps

Delivered by **Action for Children**
from **April 2018 – March 2024**

Baby Steps is a relationship-based antenatal parent education programme originally developed by the NSPCC, which is designed to support parents during pregnancy and in the weeks after birth. It is particularly suitable for vulnerable and socially-excluded parents who often face additional challenges and report feelings of overload in pregnancy and in early parenting.

How it was delivered

Parents join mid-pregnancy and continue until around 2 months after their baby is born. The programme is delivered online in a group setting, with additional catch-up groups and 1-1s for those who require it. There are additional languages within the staffing team allowing groups to be delivered in home languages.

The project began as a targeted intervention for families living in the Better Start Bradford area. Families could be referred by a range of professionals based on a specific set of criteria, including domestic abuse and lack of social or support networks. In year 5 it became a universal service to families in the Better Start Bradford area.

Before birth:

- Session 1:** How our babies develop, our health and wellbeing
- Session 2:** Transition to parenthood
- Session 3:** Labour and birth
- Session 4:** Caring for and meeting our babies

After giving birth:

- Session 5:** Welcoming our babies
- Session 6:** Bonding with our babies and our family's future

Why this project was developed

We knew from routine data that women in the Better Start Bradford area were more likely to present late to antenatal services and did not attend classes. We also know that levels of vulnerability and need were higher, and that maternal outcomes (infant mortality, poor perinatal mental health and low birth weight) were poorer.

The project aimed to:

- Improve parental confidence and self-esteem, leading to safer parenting and greater emotional availability
- Improve family relationship stability and reduce conflict
- Improve co-parenting functioning reduce stress and increase emotional availability to the child
- Improve parental reflective functioning leading to improved self-regulation in the child
- Improve parental mental health leading to more sensitive parent-infant interactions and increased likelihood of secure attachment
- More positive parental health choices for self and child around feeding, eating, exercise, smoking and drinking leads to improved family health

Impact and findings*

- The project was successfully delivered with a high completion rate, which shows it was valued by the families.
- As part of enhanced evaluation, 96.9% of families questioned agreed with the statement "I feel that Baby Steps was helpful for me".
- Parents benefitted in many ways from the different forms of support. Home visits and ongoing assistance were valued by both staff and mothers because they allowed for personalised guidance before and after birth. Facilitators' expertise and friendly approach created a supportive and safe environment, helping mothers to build their knowledge and skills.
- During lockdown, Baby Steps was able to identify safeguarding concerns in a timely manner, working in collaboration with midwifery, health visiting and social services to support families appropriately.
- Baby Steps continues to be one of the top five referrers to Bradford food banks, as well as providing emergency provision of baby items to families in need.
- A Start for Life contract has enabled the project to expand their service and become a targeted district-wide delivery until March 2025.

*This section includes information from both the evaluation report/s and project

OVER
7800

support phone calls made with participants, and over 20,000 support text messages sent



97.85%

Of families surveyed would recommend Baby Steps to family and friends



1438

unique families received at least one home visit from the team



68

full courses delivered - 94% of the total target

