



SESSION

1

Babies Matter: Changes for me and us

NAME:

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**BABIES
MATTER**

A KIDS MATTER PROGRAMME

Pre-Session planning list

To do	To buy	To prepare	Babies Matter resources
Reminder text to parents	Refreshments	Kettle, mugs, water, spoons, plastic cups, plates	Facilitator's Booklet
Double check room is booked	Supplies for baby changing facilities (nappies, wipes, nappy bags)	Tablecloth, napkins	Guest Booklets
Toys / blankets for babies	Flowers	Current information on local resources in the community	Parent form and evaluation form links (send out at the end)
Sticky labels for names	Tissues	Familiarise yourself with the 'Safer Sleep for Your Baby' page in the booklet	Group register
Fill in Parenting Team activity	Hot drink cups with lids (if using disposable)		Postcards
Pray! Prompt others to pray for you			A4 paper x 3
			Pens

On the day:

- Set up chairs in a 'horseshoe' with blankets / cushions on the floor with baby toys in reach
- Check that baby changing facilities are stocked up and clean
- Prepare tea/coffee/food on a separate table
- Welcome people as they arrive – be ready to welcome guests up to 15 minutes early. Give early guests the Parent form to fill in while they wait
- Introduce yourself, and each other, give out name labels
- Offer a tea/coffee/water; make sure hot drinks are covered if using disposable cups
- Ask guests to fill in Parent form, if not already done, as you make them a drink
- Check if literacy or language are an issue. Reassure parents that you can assist

Remember: Smile, be positive, be ready to share your good and bad experiences of parenting babies of this age!

Throughout the session, if it flows naturally, praise parents where you see them responding to their baby, reassuring them or playing with them.

In later sessions, we will be talking about how to give our partner / parenting teammate encouragement and if we have modeled this, by naturally dropping in encouragements as we see them, it will reinforce the learning.

Try not to force it or interrupt the conversation though!

My goals in facilitating this session:

Parent/carer feels sufficiently comfortable and welcomed, so that they will come back
Parent/carer understands how looking after themselves ('me') and their parenting team relationships ('PT') will help them look after their baby
Parent/carer understands what causes and reduces stress in their lives
Parent/carer complete evaluation forms to create a base line of where they are at in their parenting

Welcome

Welcome to Babies Matter and congratulations on becoming parents / parents-to-be! We hope that over our next few weeks together we will have an opportunity to think about, and prepare for, the many changes that happen when a new life is born – changes in our relationships, the demands on our time, our emotions, and our physical needs. Whether you are a dad, mum, or other important adult in your baby's life, this is a safe space to share our experiences, joys, and challenges – there is never any pressure to share, but please be assured that 'what is said in the room, stays in the room'.

The group facilitator will respect the confidentiality of the group and will not share anything that is discussed here with anyone outside the group, unless there is a concern for someone's safety or wellbeing. *Do share as much as you feel comfortable with. There is no pressure from any of us.*

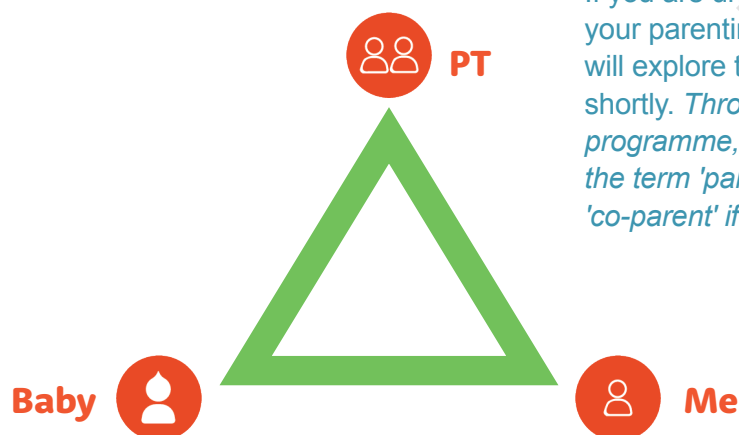
Q: What other suggestions do you have to make this an enjoyable and safe place to talk and share? E.g., minimising the use of phones.

At the end of the discussion, draw out and summarise at least 3 ground rules.

Throughout this programme we are going to be thinking about our baby, ourselves (me) and those closest to us as supporters; our parenting team (PT). For some people that might be their partner, or baby's other parent, or it could be a grandparent or a good friend. We want to emphasise that for any mothers or fathers here today that are single, the phrase 'Parenting Team' is just as relevant to you on your parenting journey.

Each of these three points of the triangle below are inter-connected and rely on each other – so if we want our relationship with our baby to be strong, and we want our baby to be the best they can, we also see that we want to invest in ourselves 'me' and those that we are co-parenting with. When all of these relationships are strong, or getting stronger, that's good for everyone involved! In each session we will look at each topic from the perspective of these three triangle points.

Some of you may have other children that will play a significant role in your baby's life and in your parenting journey. The sessions in this programme will focus on your most recent addition but you will no doubt keep any siblings in mind throughout.



If you are unsure who might be in your parenting team, don't worry we will explore this in a bit more detail shortly. Throughout this session and the programme, you might want to change the term 'parenting teammate' to 'co-parent' if that is more appropriate.



Over the next 6 weeks we will be covering:

- Session 1 – Changes for me and us
- Session 2 – Bonding and attachment
- Session 3 – Helping baby to develop
- Session 4 – Building strong relationships
- Session 5 – Baby's amazing brain
- Session 6 – Thinking back, looking forwards

Today we are going to explore the many changes that we are going through and reflect on how we manage stress.

Let's begin by introducing ourselves, including due dates/babies' names and ages, and your parenting teammate (either a partner or another significant adult in your baby's life who supports you). *Introduce yourself first, and as the guests introduce themselves, write/draw their details onto A4 paper for all to see.*

Now that we have introduced ourselves, it would be great to hear what we are hoping for from this group. *Give your own 'hopes' first (e.g., 'I am looking forward to getting to know you all and count it a privilege to be on this parenting journey with you – I really appreciated having other new parents around me when my oldest son was born as we learnt so much from each other.')* and then capture the comments of the other parents on a piece of A4 paper with 'Hopes' written in the centre.



We are going to talk about  baby,  me, and  our PT each week.

Understanding our baby

Q: Finding out you (or your partner) are pregnant is an emotional experience and different for everyone, how did you feel when you found out you/your partner/parenting teammate were pregnant? *Be prepared for positive and negative responses.*

Whilst it can be an exciting time becoming a parent, it can feel quite overwhelming bringing a new person into the world and trying to imagine how we're going to bring them up. Sometimes it can feel hard to know where to even start as new parents.

One thing we might feel overwhelmed about is how much our baby relies on us and how much they need from us.

Throughout Babies Matter we will include activities that are interactive and help bring the topics to life. If you feel self-conscious, that is natural! Take your time and give it your best shot. If your baby is asleep, or if your baby is the only one awake in the room, we don't want you to feel pressured to join in but giving things a go in an environment that is supportive might help you feel more confident when you're on your own. You can also try this at home, in your own time. *Go with the flow of the room and don't force anything that seems to cause stress. Look for opportunities to encourage guests in the way they engage with their baby throughout the session.*

Activity: To help us connect with the idea of understanding our baby, we are going to do an activity to focus on what needs our baby has. Spend 30 seconds (I'll tell you when the time is up) looking at your baby or, if you're still pregnant, imagining your baby in their cot or in their buggy. As you look at them or think about them, bring to mind all the things a baby might need. What do they need right now? What will they need later today? Or as they get older?

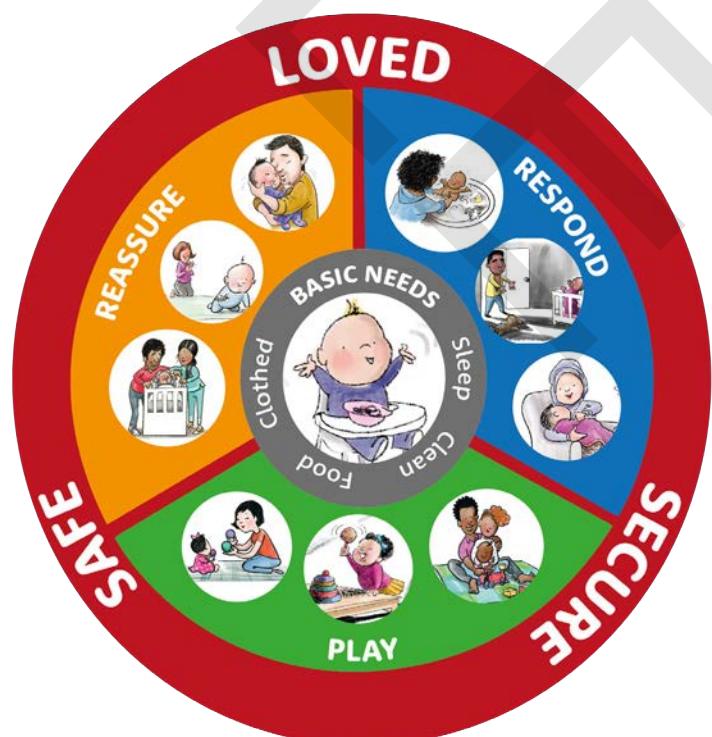
Q: What were the things that came to mind?

Q: How did you find spending that time focusing entirely on your baby and their needs?

This diagram helps us to understand both the needs our baby has and the important role we have in meeting those needs so that they feel loved, safe, and secure. *Over the next few weeks, we are going to be focusing on these important needs shown around the outside that help us build a strong connection (sometimes called 'attachment') with our baby. Your Health Visitor is a great resource for helpful information about babies' basic needs. Babies Matter is about helping us to know how to reassure, respond to and play with our baby, in order that they will feel loved, safe, and secure.*

Q: In what ways do you help your baby to feel loved, safe, and secure?

Q: What is unique about this for you as mum, dad, grandparents, etc? *Emphasise that we each have an important role to play in the life of our baby, especially if dads are present, and that we have different strengths in the way we parent and care for our baby.*





Changes in my life

Now we are going to think about how life is changing at the moment.

Q: What are some of the changes you've noticed in you and around you since becoming pregnant / having a baby?

Changes that come with having a baby may include:

- Different routines
- Learning new skills (e.g., feeding, nappies, winding, settling baby)
- Shifts in family relationships
- Lack of sleep
- New/intense emotions
- Physical health and changes to my body
- Financial challenges
- Different priorities and demands on my time



Q: How are you feeling about these changes? (Reassure guests that this parenting programme is designed to support new parents to manage these challenges.)

You might need to expand on 'shifts in family relationships' and 'different priorities'; this is a good place to start to think about the pressures relationships will be under, and the changes in identity new parents may feel. An example of this might be helpful, such as 'I found it really hard to keep in touch with friends and the baby took up all my time and energy.' Be prepared that guests may share about relationship challenges, and that this topic is not addressed in depth until Session 4. Reassure guests that struggles within parenting teammate relationships are common and that being aware of these is a good place to start. Give guests a chance to say more about this after the session if you think they need space to talk.

We are building a new family, and this is an ongoing process, and we won't always get it right. We can balance our determination to do the best for our children whilst looking after ourselves and strengthening our relationship with our teammate. No one can be a perfect parent; we are aiming for 'good enough'.

Below are two questions that could think through with your parenting teammate in the week ahead. Try and find time to share honestly and listen to what your teammate is feeling.



Changes I have found it difficult to adapt to:



.....



Changes we are adjusting to well:



.....

Changes to our sleep

One area where we experience a lot of change when a new baby arrives is sleep.

Q: What has been your experience of this so far?

Q: How do you feel when you have less sleep?

There is no 'one size fits all' method when it comes to helping our baby to sleep.

Included at the back of this session is some information you might like to look at to help you think about how to help your baby to sleep. Many parents feel fed up, angry, helpless, anxious or at a loss when their baby doesn't sleep at night. This is normal and recognising these feelings is an important first step to find ways to cope with these difficult emotions.

When our baby is crying and not sleeping it can lead to us experiencing big emotions. If this builds up and goes on for a long time, it can be hard to know how to handle these emotions. We will look at what we do to look after ourselves as we experience this pressure, as well as how to soothe our babies, throughout the programme. You can speak to your GP or Health Visitor if this is something you are struggling with.

One NHS resource that seeks to support parents in managing normal infant crying emphasises four points that we can remember as ICON.

- I** – Infant crying is normal;
- C** – Comforting methods can help;
- O** – It's okay to walk away;
- N** – Never, ever shake a baby.

You might want to come back to this for reassurance if your baby is having a particularly unsettled period and speak to your Health Visitor if you're concerned.

Check in with the group before moving on and recognise this is a heavy topic to have touched on, if it seems like someone is struggling with this topic, offer to speak to them at the end of the session and advise them to speak to their GP or Health Visitor.

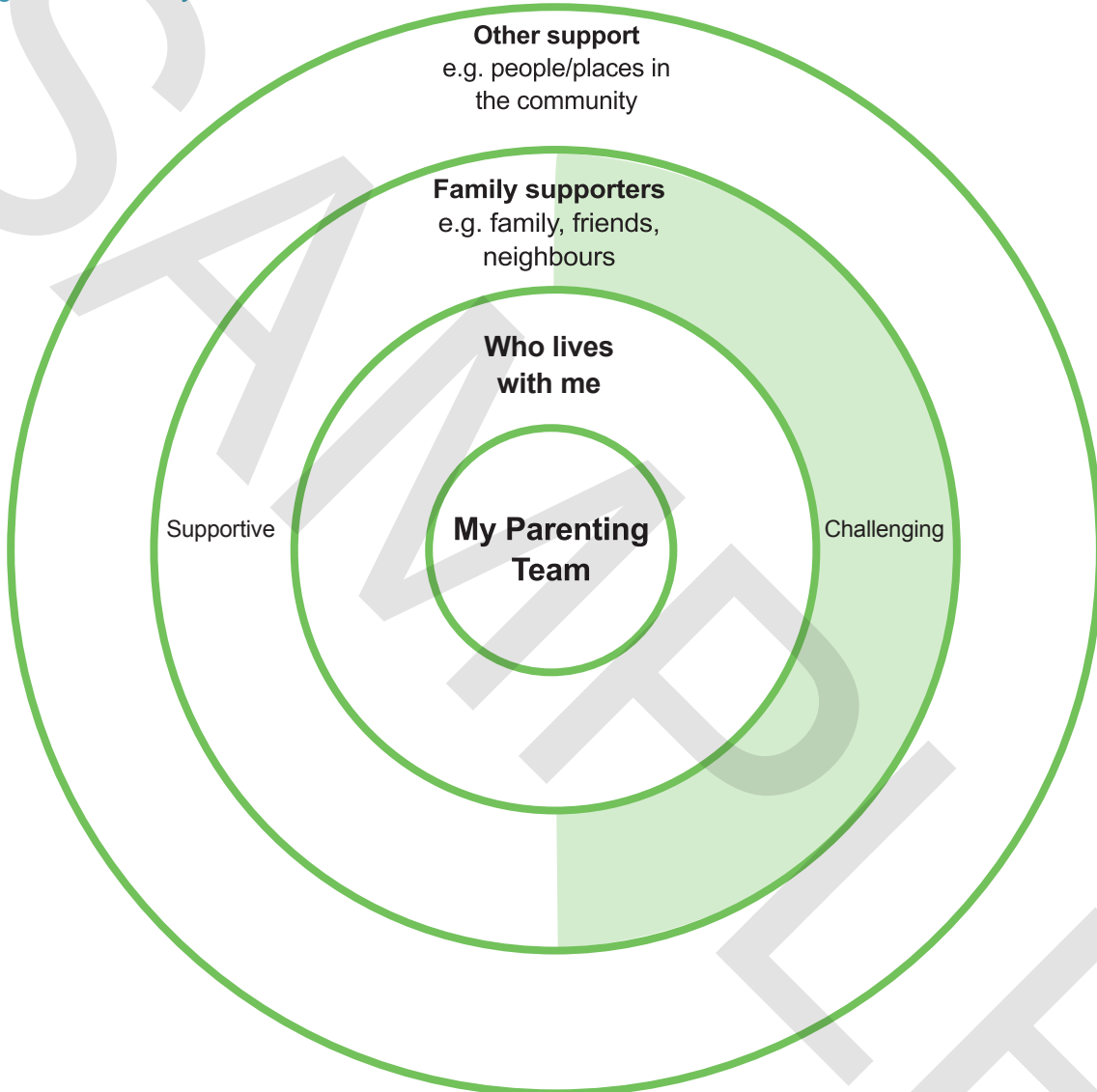




My Parenting Team

As we adjust to our new roles as parents, it can really help to have other people around us to support us. This could be immediate family, wider family, close friends, neighbours, or supportive professionals. We call this our Parenting Team.

Let's have a think together about who is in our Parenting Team. Please fill in the inner circle with your child's name. In the next circle fill in who lives with you at home. In the next circle fill in your family's supporters (e.g., child's other parent if separated, extended family, friends, neighbours, school, social services, wider family etc) and whether these relationships are supportive or challenging. In the outside circle fill in organisations, groups, or services in the community that supports your family. *Prepare yours in advance and show the group before they begin. Once everyone has finished, invite guests to briefly share their circles.*



(Come here after explaining My Parenting Team activity) Ask guests:

Q: It's important for us to have people in our lives that are supportive and encouraging. Who in your life helps you in this way?

Q: Which relationships are you worried about/cause you stress?

Q: How can we make sure that we are getting the support we need from people in our parenting team? *(In this discussion help parents to focus on the importance of accessing help from those around them)*

Q: How easy do you find it to invest time and energy into these relationships? We are going to look more at this in Session 4 and some practical ways to strengthen the relationships in our lives.

Looking at our Parenting Team reminds us that raising a baby is a huge job; it is good for us to focus on the importance of 'me' and our wellbeing. We will touch on this in each session in the programme to help us build a toolkit of ways to look after ourselves *(refer to triangle at the beginning of the session)*.



Looking after ourselves & understanding stress

Highlight that this is a 'Me' section. If you have dads in your group, you might want to see if dads would rather talk to each other and then share back with their partner after.

Q: Why do you think we have this section on looking after ourselves?

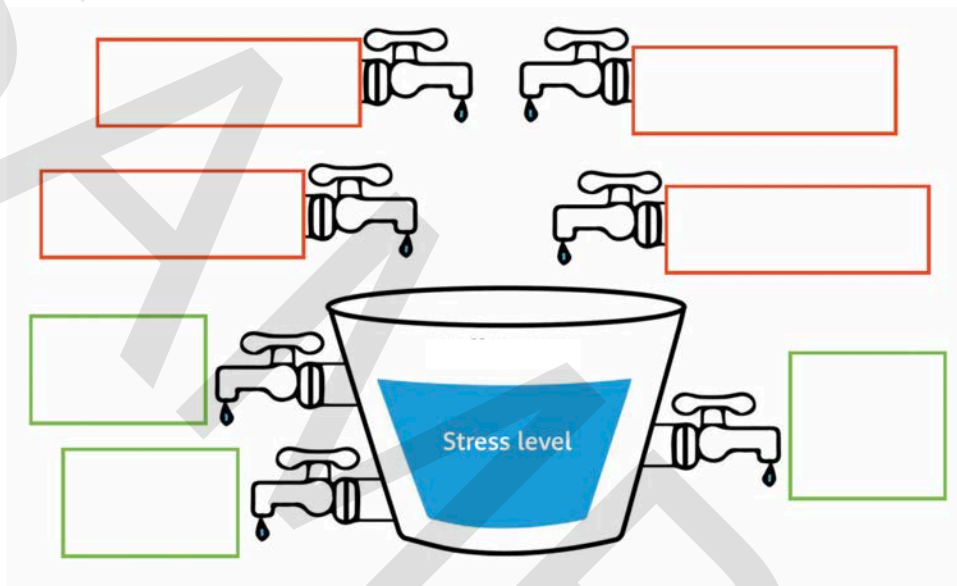
Q: What might happen to us if we don't prioritise our own wellbeing?

Q: If we don't look after ourselves, how could this affect our relationships with our babies? And our parenting teammate?

Q: What gets in the way of us doing this?

The arrival of a new baby can make it difficult to find time to look after ourselves. Looking after our own wellbeing is one way we can invest in our children; it can be hard to meet all the needs our children have or to look after our relationships when we are run down or not prioritising ourselves.

Stress Bucket Model



The stress bucket model helps us to think about how we handle feeling overwhelmed. Imagine that we all have a stress bucket of a certain size. We all have different stresses and difficulties in our lives, and these are represented by the taps pouring into the bucket. We also have release taps that help to reduce the levels of stress.

Let's think about our own experiences and how these relate to the parts of the stress bucket image.

Q: What causes you stress (*Relationships, finances, sleep, health*)? These are the taps going into our stress bucket.

Q: Do you think you have a big or a small stress bucket e.g., do you have a lot of stress to handle or not much? *Some of us might not realise that we have a high capacity for stress and have a lot of stress taps pouring in.*

Q: What are your release taps, the things that help you feel less stressed?

We might also have things we do that sometimes feel like they help by getting rid of some the stress but in fact end up feeding back into the bucket, these are our unhelpful coping strategies.

Q: Can you think of anything you do that might have this effect? *Share a personal example such as spending a long time scrolling on your phone or eating unhealthy foods when feeling stressed.*

Having a baby can bring with it new stresses and so we may need to adjust to having more stress in our bucket and find ways to do things that help us feel less stressed. Looking after our own wellbeing and managing our stress levels might feel like a luxury we don't have time for at the moment, but the 'me' in the triangle is just as important as the 'baby' and the 'PT'.

Each week we are going to be thinking about our wellbeing because prioritising our mental health and physical health will help us to be the best parent we can to our new baby.



Physical health and changes

Let's think about physical health and change.

Encouraging each other to take time to be active, and trying to eat healthily, will help us to feel better about ourselves, and that will help us to look after our baby well.

Q: For parenting teammates / dads, how have you found looking after your physical health whilst preparing for the arrival of baby, or since they have arrived?

Q: For mums, how easy or hard has it been looking after your physical health during pregnancy, or after the birth of your baby?

Recovering from birth takes time and can impact how mum feels about her own body. Parenting teammates can help by being patient and understanding. Mums can have a postnatal check 6-8 weeks after baby is born to make sure they are recovering and feeling well.

For any dads or PTs, this is also a good encouragement for you. The link between physical health and our mental health is strong. How we look after our health and wellbeing might be different for each of us.

What is one thing I could try this week to look after my physical health?



Evaluation

Before we wrap up our session today, we're going to spend some time sharing with you about feedback and evaluation.

Kids Matter loves feedback! We use simple online surveys to measure if the programme is successful at things such as improving parental confidence and wellbeing.

To do this, we would like you to fill in a couple of forms online. The forms have questions about how you feel about your parenting and also your overall well-being. We would love you to be as honest as possible. This is not about being perfect parents!

I will not be looking at your answers and nor will anyone else other than the Kids Matter research team who will put everyone's data together. Your names and postcodes are used only to match your answers up with your answers at the end of the programme when we repeat the forms to see if there has been any change. The reason for doing these forms is so Kids Matter can learn if taking part in this programme helps you feel more confident as a parent and if that helps your children do better as well. If filling in the forms raises any concerns for you then we are here to talk anything through.

Let me know if anyone needs any help with the language or would like me to just read the questions to them. I'm going to send you a link which will take you straight to the forms.

First, choose which session you are on (this is Session 1), then fill out your name and postcode and answer all the questions and keep clicking OK and NEXT until you get to DONE, once clicked it will say **'Thank you for completing the survey'**.

Send out the evaluation form links by email, text or WhatsApp and wait while people complete the forms. This usually takes about 10-15 minutes. If anyone wants to complete the forms outside of the group, agree that they will complete within 2 days and send a group reminder after this point if anyone hasn't completed the form.

Thank you so much for doing that – we will do the same forms again in session 6 and at our Booster. Now let's sum up what we've covered today.

Summing up....

As we have seen today, having a baby is a time for celebration and joy. It is also a time of huge change, practically, physically, and emotionally, for everyone in the parenting team. Being aware of these changes and talking with each other about how to face them together, gives us a strong place to start from. If we are parenting alone then finding our 'supportive other' to be in our parenting team will help us to cope with the challenges and help us to share and enjoy the good times.

Encourage parent to invite their parenting teammate to the next session – ask them how they could encourage them to attend.

At the end of each session, we will take it in turns to share something that has been helpful or important to us during our time together.

Start with your own example.

Q: What is one thing you have found particularly helpful this week?

Encourage each guest to share if they can.

Then ask them the question below and encourage them to write their answers.

What can I practise/try/do differently this week?

I am looking forward to us meeting together next week to see how we are all getting on! *Encourage guests to take food away with them; be available to those who want to talk more at the end.*

At the end of the session:

- *Look at the Top Tips*
 - *Make sure you've recorded attendance and details in line with your church/organisation's GDPR policy*
 - *Seek consent from everyone to set up a WhatsApp Group to use for chat and group reminders*
- Encourage them all to come back and thank them for their contribution today*
- *Offer food to them all to take away*
 - *Don't rush off!*
 - *Be available for anyone who wants to chat*

After the session:

- *Record any great quotes/stories*
- *Send a message to anyone who didn't make the session*
- *Fill in the portal on Beacon*

Extra resources



Sleep patterns

Recommended hours of sleep for babies

Although these are the recommended number of hours of sleep, this will vary for every baby and night-time sleep will be interrupted for feeding, nappies and settling for some months. Having interrupted sleep and experiencing tiredness is hard but responding to our baby's needs is a good thing, even if they are 'meant' to be sleeping! Phases where your baby doesn't sleep well won't last forever.

Age	Total Hours	Night-time Hours	Nap Hours
Newborn	16 - 18	8 - 9	7 - 9 (3 - 5 naps)
2 - 4 months	14 - 16	9 - 10	4 - 5 (3 naps)
4 - 6 months	14 - 15	10	4 - 5 (2 - 3 naps)
6 - 9 months	14	10 - 11	3 - 4 (2 naps)
9 - 12 months	14	10 - 12	2 - 3 (2 naps)
12 - 18 months	13 - 14	11 - 12	2 - 3 (1 - 2 naps)
18 months - 2 years	13 - 14	11	2 (1 nap)



Bedtime routine

Babies like repetition and predictability as it helps them feel that the world is a safe place they can understand. Having a regular bedtime routine can help baby feel prepared for the night of sleep ahead, and will ultimately help them to sleep for longer stretches. NHS guidelines are that for the first 6 months, your baby should be in the same room as you when they're asleep, both day and night.

Around the age of 3 months, you could start to introduce a bedtime routine in the evening.

The routine could consist of:

- Having a bath or wash, and brushing teeth (when they have some!)
- Changing into pyjamas and a fresh nappy
- Saying goodnight to everyone
- Final feed
- Reading a bedtime story
- Dimming the lights in the room to create a calm atmosphere
- Putting them into their cot
- Giving a goodnight kiss and cuddle
- Singing a lullaby or having a wind-up musical mobile you can turn on when you've put your baby to bed

Often we are so tired when trying to settle our babies during the night that we try to keep ourselves awake by watching TV or being on our phones, but this might be stimulating our babies and preventing them from going to sleep.



Public Health
England



Basis
Baby sleep info source

To reduce the chance of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), always follow safer sleep for your baby:

Put them on their **BACK** for every sleep

In a **CLEAR FLAT SLEEP SPACE**

Keep them **SMOKE FREE** day and night



Public Health
England



Basis
Baby sleep info source

Tips for safer bedsharing

Some parents choose to share a bed with their baby.

Be aware – You should not share a bed with your baby if:

- you have recently drunk any alcohol
- you or your partner smoke
- you have taken any drugs that make you feel sleepy or less aware
- your baby was born prematurely or very small

Sofas and armchairs are always dangerous places to fall asleep with your baby – move somewhere safer if you might fall asleep

Keep pets away from the bed and do not have other children sharing the bed

Make sure baby won't fall out of bed or get trapped between the mattress and the wall

Keep pillows and adult bedding away from baby

Follow the tips if you think you might fall asleep with your baby in the bed



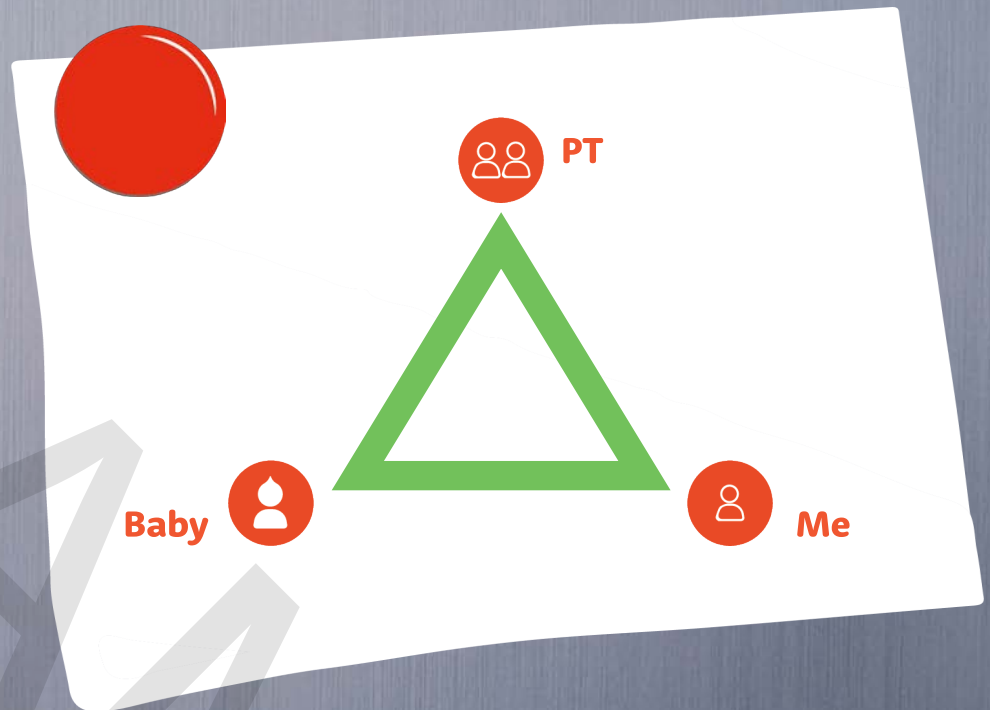


Notes

Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal dotted lines.

SAMPLE

Changes for me and us



No one can be a perfect parent; we are aiming for 'good enough'

As we adjust to our new roles as parents, it can really help to have other people around us to support us. We call this our Parenting Team

