



THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING
Unit 7, The Colchester Business Centre,
1 George Williams Way,
Colchester, Essex CO1 2JS, England

TELEPHONE: 01206 562 626
EMAIL: info@theministryofparenting.com
WEB: www.theministryofparenting.com

PATRON: Mary Crowley OBE

THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING

A COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

Report on the Braintree Baby Incredible Years Baby group

Introduction

The Braintree Incredible Year's baby group was commissioned by the Mid Essex PCT in partnership with the See Saw children's centre and Family Mosaic (College House).

The Ministry of Parenting (CIC) provided this course in the heart of Braintree, at the See Saw children's centre, inviting young mothers, fathers and carers under the age of 21 to come along with their babies.

Parenting programmes support the parent and carer. They are non judgemental and there to help in a fun and relaxed way.

The aim is to give parents and carers the skills and confidence to bring their children up in a healthy and happy lifestyle.

The group leaders are trained in this field and encourage discussions within the group around parenting. The programme covers a wide range of different approaches and methods around teething, crying and feeding and much more to give new mums and dads as much information and choice as possible.

AIM

The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programme supports parents and their babies aged 0 - 12months. It is a six part programme focusing on helping parents to learn to observe and read babies' cues and signals; to understand babies as intelligent learners; to learn how to provide nurturing and responsive care; to understand brain development and babies development of object and person concepts; to learn the importance of providing a physical and tactile environment; to understand the importance of finding time for oneself and to learn about visual and verbal stimulation and communication.



THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING

The Incredible Years Parent and Baby Programme has six main subjects:

- 1) Getting to know your baby
- 2) Babies as intelligent learners
- 3) Providing physical, tactile and visual stimulation
- 4) Parents learning to read babies' minds
- 5) Gaining support
- 6) Babies emerging a sense of self

OBJECTIVES

Part 1: Getting to Know Your Baby (0-3 months)

- Learning how to observe and read babies' cues and signals
- Understanding how to cope with babies' crying and fussy periods
- Learning about feeding and burping
- Understanding the importance of communication with babies
- Learning about babies' fevers and recognizing when to call the doctor
- Providing babies with visual, auditory and physical stimulation
- Learning about soft spots, baby acne, sleep habits, spitting, normal bowel movements and diapering
- Learning how to baby-proof a home
- Learning about babies' developmental milestones in the first 3 months
- Understanding the importance of getting rest and support and shifting priorities

Part 2: Babies as Intelligent Learners (3—6 months)

- Understanding “observational learning” or mirroring and how babies learn
- Learning about how to talk “parentese” to babies
- Learning songs to sing to babies
- Understanding the importance of parental communication for babies' brain development
- Understanding normal developmental landmarks ages 3-6 months
- Learning ways to keep babies safe

Part 3: Providing Physical, Tactile and Visual Stimulation

- Learning about ways to provide physical and tactile stimulation for babies and its importance for brain development
- Understanding the importance of visual and auditory stimulation
Modulating the amount of stimulation babies receive
- Understanding the importance of reading to babies
- Providing opportunities for babies to explore safely involving siblings and other family members in baby play times
- Learning games to play with babies
- Learning to keep babies safe during bath times and other activities



THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING

Part 4: Parents Learning to Read Babies' Minds

- Learning how to read babies' cues and developmental needs
- Understanding how to respond to babies' crying and fussy periods
- Strategies to set up predictable routines and bedtime rituals
- Learning how to help baby feel secure and loved
- Understanding how babies can be over or under stimulated
- Learning strategies to help babies' calm down
- Knowing how to get support

Part 5: Gaining Support

- Understanding the importance of finding time for oneself to renew energy for parenting
- Understanding the importance of involving other family members and friends in your baby's life
- Learning how to get support from others
- Knowing how to inform other infant care providers or baby sitters of baby's needs and interests
- Knowing how to baby-proof house and review checklist
- Learning developmental infant landmarks (6-12 months)

Part 6: Babies Emerging Sense of Self (6-12 months)

- Understanding how babies learn - "observational learning" and modelling
- Learning how to provide predictable routines or schedules for babies
- Learning how to introduce solid foods in child-directed ways
- Knowing how to allow for babies' exploration and discovery
- Knowing how to talk to babies in ways that enhance language development
- Understanding how to make enjoyment of baby a priority
- Learning about visual and nonverbal communication signals
- Understanding about babies' development of object and person permanence
- Understanding how to baby-proof a home and completion of checklist



THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING

Participants

The parent group

Parent	Parent Male or female	Age of parent	Number of babies/ children	Age of babies/children	Post code address	Attendance
1(LG)	F	16	1	4months	CM7 LJS	100%
2 (D)	M	16	1	4 months	CM7 LJS	90%
3 (CP)	F	16	1	3 weeks	CM7 LJS	10%
4 (GR)	F	17	1	3 months	CM7 LJS	100%
5 (TR)	F	17	Pregnant	n/a	CM7 LJS	20%
6 (L)	M	19	2	5 weeks 2 years	CM7 1NQ	40%
7(S)	F	19	2	5 weeks 2 years	CM7 1NQ	40%
8	F	16	1	4 months	CM7 LJS	30%
9	M	18	1	3 months	CM7 LJS	100%
Mosaic staff	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	CM7 LJS	100%
See Saw Staff	F	n/a	n/a	n/a	CM7 LJS	100%

Attendance Issues

There was a serious child protection issue that came alight during the course which led to a social care investigation and this affected one couple's attendance at the group. The pregnant mother took ill pre birth and was advised to bed rest so will attend the next group.

Weekly evaluations (norm results)

Reported content of sessions; very helpful
Video examples; helpful
Group leaders teaching; very helpful
Group discussion; helpful



THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING

Final evaluation from the parents

The self completion questionnaire also provided some very positive feedback including:-

- What parents found most helpful; playing, sleeping, the group, exchanging ideas, visual aids, learning that every baby is different and discussing routines
- What they liked the most about the group; the leaders, that the babies were there too, the relaxed atmosphere and the tips
- What they liked least about the group; that it was too short
- How the programme could be improved; waiting until their child was a little older, more in depth sessions about feelings and guilt and getting dads involved

These comments can be used to improve future programmes.

All who completed the programme asked to be put forward to the toddler programme.

Some comments on content from the parents;

- Learning about weaning was really helpful, learnt some things I did not know
- Very interesting
- It's great to see young parents interested, really getting involved and learning new skills and more about their babies' development
- Very good and educational
- I found out things that might help me to improve the way I interact with the kids
- The games were good fun and got the point across well

Key factors

- The staff at College house worked very hard to ensure the young parents attended the course. They transported them to the venue and provided picnic lunches after the group. One member of staff stayed in



THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING

the group both as an observer for their own personal development and as a supportive aid for the Collage house parents

- The See saw centre was very user friendly and inviting. They accommodated the baby group to coincide with the baby massage group which the parents were also invited to attend in the afternoon
- The funding provided light healthy refreshments, information folders and handouts to all the parents
- The local Health visitor was proactive in referring and supporting the baby group

Case studies

Tom

Tom was referred by the Collage house staff, Tom is 16, a father, employed and unqualified (did not complete school education) Tom comes from a separated family background with no contact with his natural father. Tom lives in Collage House with his partner Jane who is also 16 years old.

Toms goal at the start of the group was to learn how “be” with his baby. Tom expressed very honestly that he was fearful of changing his babies nappy or putting his baby to bed as he was very concerned about becoming or feeling angry with his baby- he articulated he was concerned that he would hurt his baby if he got angry – because that was what this father did with him- therefore he refused to take active involvement with his babies care.

Tom attended the sessions and took the course very seriously, he was amazingly open about his concerns in his own abilities as a father and would freely question the group leaders on child development issues and listened to the advice given by all the group members.

At the competition of the group Tom stated (and this also advocated by Jane his partner) Tom proudly stated he was changing his baby's nappy and reading to his baby when he put his baby to bed.

Annie

Annie is 16 years old, she was about to leave Collage house to move into a flat with her 18 year old boyfriend. Annie left school with limited qualifications and was worried about attending the course because she had difficulty in reading and writing.



THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING

She said the reason she attended the course was she was worried about her baby son as he was “violent and aggressive”; the baby was at the start of the group 3 months old- she felt her baby was violent because the baby pinched her when she held him.

During the course Annie was encouraged to read to her baby- she was very empowered by the support by the group leaders and went on to demonstrate positive reading to babies to the whole grouping a role play.

At the end of the course Annie said her baby was clever and affectionate; she re framed her view of her baby just though having some basic understanding of child development in a safe and supportive group setting

These two case studies briefly show how powerful the groups can be. It is difficult to truly measure the impact as the babies are very young and the changes appeared very personal and intimate to the individual parents; however that fact all the group members have signed up to attend the next course on “toddlers” is a statement of how these young parents value the opportunity to learn and share the difficulties and joys of parenting.

Jeannie Gordon