



The Role of Health Visiting

Transition to parenthood and support through
the early years



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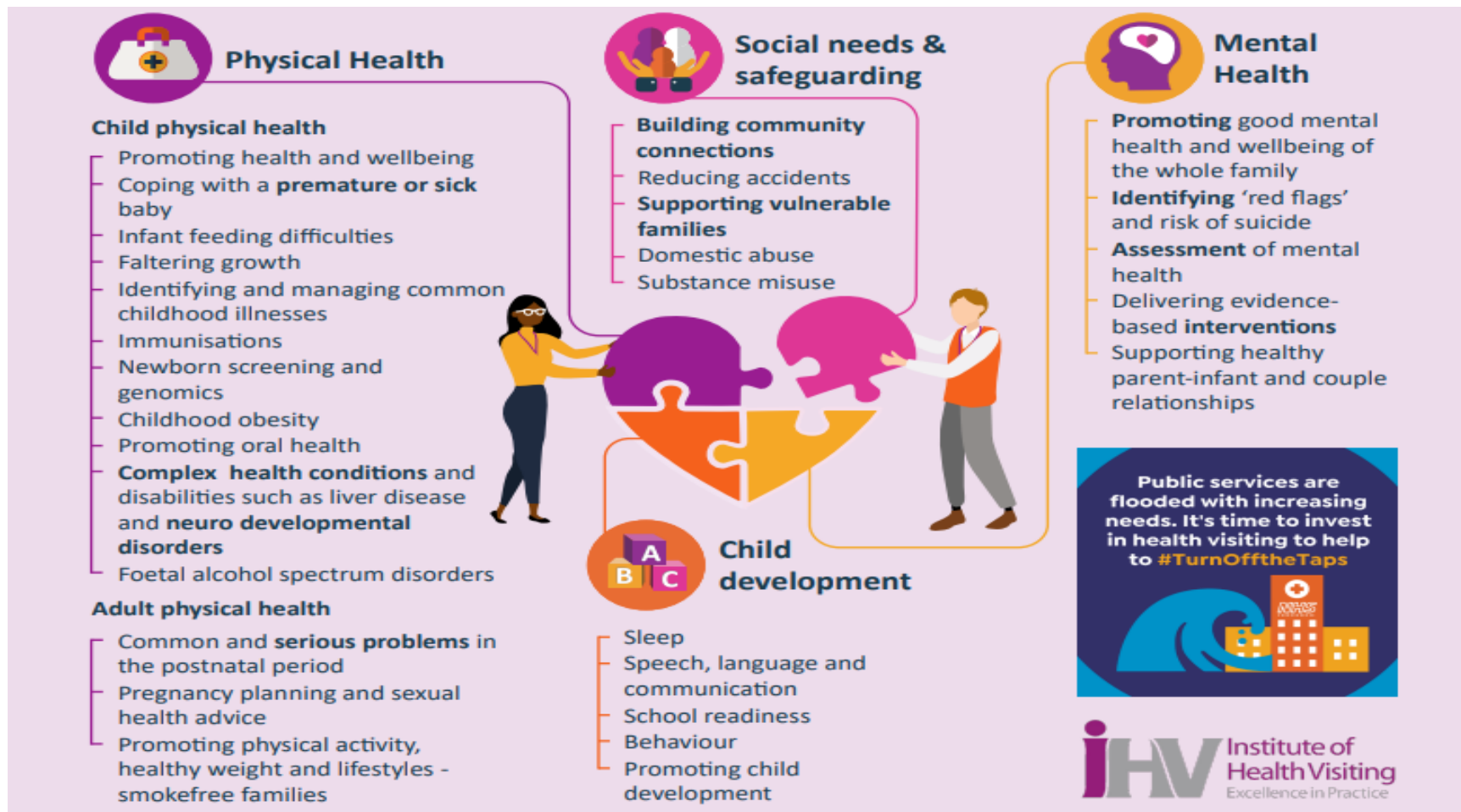


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What health visitors do



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Supporting infant mental health

The delivery of health visitor-led parenting is a requirement of the universal child health promotion programme for all children and families in Northern Ireland.

Supporting the transition to parenthood is one of the areas where health visitors have highest impact on the health and wellbeing of children 0-5 years.

Home visiting and parenting groups provide valuable opportunities to support parents to understand the emotional transition to parenthood and build positive relationships with their baby.



5,500
births



1,800
first time
parents



Family
Health
Assessment



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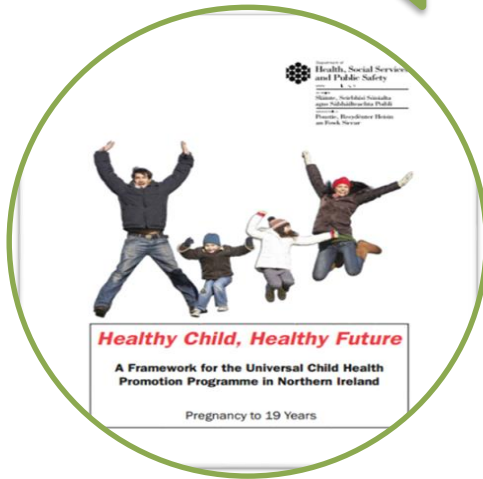


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Healthy Child

Healthy Future



Getting Ready
for Baby

Unicef Baby
Friendly Gold

Star Babies

Solihull
Approach

Baby and Me

Infant
Massage

Family Nurse
Partnership



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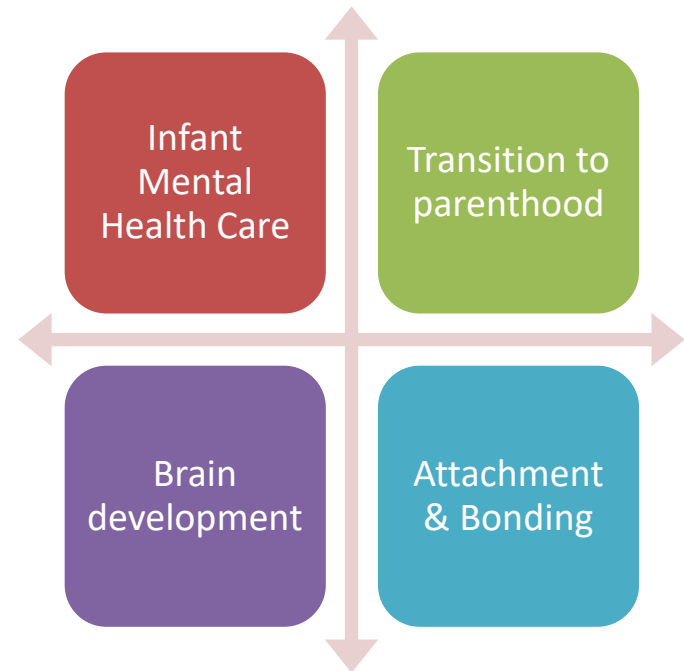


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Star Babies

- Enhanced universal home visiting service for first time parents
- Based on knowledge of baby brain development and impact of early childhood experience
- Based on importance of attachment and influence of early relationships
- Focus on social and emotional development

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STAR BABIES FRAMEWORK: AN OVERVIEW OF VISITS

Age and Stage	Supporting Relationships	Promoting Development	Suggested Resources
Antenatal Visit HV	Introducing Star Babies Bonding - bump to birth Baby brain development and growing relationship Skin-to-skin	Expectations Baby abilities Becoming a parent Involving fathers/partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Now That You Are a Parent- Information Flyer ✓ Baby and Me Resource Pack ✓ Ethan's First Half Hour
New Birth Visit 10-14 Days HV	Bonding and Attachment Getting to know your baby Positioning, holding and cuddling Skin to skin, gentleness, eye contact, talking, smiling, listening Introducing baby cues and signals	Calming and comforting Crying baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Social Baby-Baby and Me Resource Pack
1 Month HV/PHSN/CHA	Baby's Emotional/Physical Needs What is baby doing now? Age-stage update (visual/neural) How parent interaction supports baby brain development. Baby cues and signals.	Holding and Positioning Feeding baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Child development aide-memoire ✓ Social Baby-All About Baby Cues Resource Pack ✓ Baby and Me Resource Pack



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Star Babies: Evaluation of a health visiting initiative for first-time parents in Northern Ireland

Recent decades have seen a rapid increase in our understanding of how children develop, before birth and in the first 3 years of life, and the significance of this early period for public health and health inequalities. This knowledge includes developmental neurophysiology, the interplay of genetic inheritance and environment and evidence confirming the crucial influence that pregnancy and the early years have on establishing the child's future life course (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000; Centre on the Developing Child, 2010; Cowley et al, 2015; Miguel et al, 2019). This is a critical period for assembling the neurophysiological, psychological and behavioural aspects of development that lead to health inequalities (Irwin et al, 2007; Shonkoff et al, 2009; The 1001 Critical Days, 2015; Marmot et al, 2020). In turn, this knowledge has laid the foundation for an increased understanding of the health promotion and preventive interventions that are most likely to help and where the strongest evidence lies (Shonkoff, 2014).

It is recognised that early years intervention before the age of 2 is key to transforming social, health and economic outcomes for the better (1001 Critical Days, 2015). Minimising risk factors related to social and emotional development is particularly relevant during the antenatal and postnatal periods and in the first year of life when the majority of women are in regular contact with services (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), 2014; The 1001 Critical Days, 2015).

There are questions about how health visitors in the UK practise, and about what makes the role effective in terms of how families might benefit.

The nature of the health visitor-client relationship needs to be clarified, along with evidence for any therapeutic aspects or other aspects of the work of health visitors. This includes identifying the different elements of the relationship and the evidence base for these on children and families.

A clearer understanding of health visiting skills; specifically, relationship forming, needs assessment

Abstract

Star Babies is an enhancement of the universal Child Health Promotion Programme in Northern Ireland, where first-time parents are offered additional regular health visiting support from the antenatal period until the baby is 12 months of age. This study was carried out to evaluate outcomes of first-time parents who received the core Child Health Programme or the enhanced Star Babies programme to identify the areas where the programmes are successful and to quantitatively assess the magnitude of their impact. First-time parents were invited to participate in the study and were divided into two groups: those in the Star Babies programme ($n=189$) and those in the core Child Health Promotion Programme ($n=125$). The study found differences between the two groupings of first-time parents and the evaluation of the health visiting services received in terms of infant feeding, knowledge of preventing home accidents and overall satisfaction varied across the two groups. The findings highlight the positive outcomes from an enhanced health visiting programme such as Star Babies, with implications for policy, practice and service development.

Key words

Healthcare roles • Public health • Population health

and professional judgement, would help to identify their importance and how the different forms of practice influence the experiences of service users. The literature has revealed that health visiting is characterised by an approach known as 'orientation to practice' (Cowley et al, 2013; Cowley et al, 2015). This embodies the values, skills and attitudes needed to deliver health visiting services through salutogenesis (health creation),

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BABY AND ME



A Parent Group Model for the Health Visiting Service

Groups aim to increase knowledge and understanding of healthy baby growth and development and support confidence and enjoyment, during transition to parenthood.



What did we do?

What was the Issue?



Public Health Nursing (PHN) identified variation in provision, structure and content of the parenting group support model. This service improvement initiative was informed by service user experience and staff feedback.

What Parents Said



Local parents indicated the need for more contact with their health visiting team in group sessions, greater inclusion of fathers and a greater focus on nurturing and emotional support, especially with a first baby.

What Practitioners Said



A working group of practitioners was established. Representatives agreed that local parent groups were at different levels of development, and content across teams.

Scoping Existing Practice



It is important to ensure quality and consistency of weekly sessions. An information template was provided for completion, regarding local delivery, content and activities. Practitioners shared ideas to innovate and adapt practice.

Resource Pack Developed



A resource pack was developed to guide and support local practitioners. Weekly topics and themes include: getting to know your baby, nurturing relationships, growth and development, healthy minds and bodies and day-to-day parenting.



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Parent Feedback



'Having the opportunity to get out of the house and meet other mums and discuss things that are going on in my baby's life. Lovely friendly staff.'



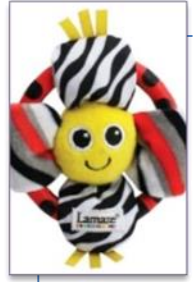
'Social interaction for both myself and baby; getting advice about certain aspects of being a new mum; the group was easy to talk to and everything was informative.'



'Enjoyed practical advice from other mums-I think these groups are fab for new mums - found it very beneficial socially.'



'Having the chance to ask questions - getting new tips. Good opportunity to hear others struggles and where they have had support and help.'



'Good variety of topics covered; knowledge sharing and trouble shooting. Feel like I have learned loads of valuable information.'



'Heart start-found baby resuscitation and choking really good-good to know this info and good to hear others' experiences.'



Infant Massage



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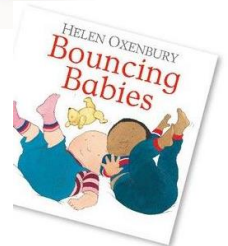
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Tiny Happy People



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[Why face-to-face conversation is so important to babies' language development - BBC Tiny Happy People](#)



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Baby Friendly



[The Importance of relationship building video - Baby Friendly Initiative \(unicef.org.uk\)](https://www.unicef.org.uk)



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