

## READ THIS

IF YOU ARE WORKING

- TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE RATES
- WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DISADVANTAGED AND SOCIALLY EXCLUDED
- ON MAKING INFORMATION MORE ACCESSIBLE



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# A bump start

During a pregnancy, parents can be very receptive to new information about their baby's development. Recognising that disadvantaged groups need support to lay the foundations of communication, *Sasha Bemrose* and *Lynn Lynch* joined forces with a cartoonist to develop an antenatal pack, appropriately titled 'Your Bump and Beyond'.

From the moment of birth - and even before - a baby is a social being that finds and engages in interaction with other humans and the wider environment. An excellent opportunity exists in pregnancy to lay the foundations of interaction and communication, so we have developed an evidence based pictorial information pack. 'Your Bump and Beyond' can be used with parents in the antenatal and postnatal period to enhance parent-baby bonding and maximise the baby's full potential. It has been piloted

in the South Wales Valleys of Rhondda Cynon Taff with 30 mothers. Due to its success - and demand - it has been printed, and is now available to buy.

So, how did it all start? The Welsh Assembly Government (2001) emphasises the importance of clinical networking to provide effective care. As a Surestart speech and language therapist, Sasha was keen to work with families and children in a preventative way. She had attended a conference (Hodzic, 2002) that emphasised that babies can develop before they are born, and the importance of parent-baby bonding at the earliest stages. With this in mind she realised the importance of working with families in the antenatal stage. At the same time, Lynn was aware of a recent study looking at the speech and language abilities of children in the local area. The findings emphasised the level of delay that children living in this area of deprivation suffer. Lynn had been involved in a previous project using pictorial information with vulnerable woman. She, too, was looking to develop a way of working with expectant and young mothers to improve the skills of young children.

At the time of our consultation we had therefore identified a need for understandable, accessible information that would encourage positive interaction and communication skills prior to birth and in the early postnatal days. We pooled Sasha's knowledge of early interaction and communication and Lynn's knowledge of pregnancy and working with vulnerable women - and 'Your Bump and Beyond' was the result.

Rhondda Cynon Taff is an area of significant socio-economic deprivation with poor health status across all demographic groupings. It has the highest rate of conception in Wales in the 13-15 age group (RCT Surestart Plan, 2000-2002). We recognise that parents and their children in this area are some of the most vulnerable families at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion.

## Seeds for development

The link between family deprivation and child learning is complex and multi directional. Children from deprived areas are disadvantaged in their learning due to many factors such as family stresses, economic difficulties, parental experiences of education, their limited literacy skills and low self-esteem.

Surestart (DfES, 2001) recognises that a child's communication skills can only be developed with adequate stimulation and response from others. Babies are social beings and need someone to respond to their communication. The seeds for development are laid in the earliest stages of baby-parent interaction.

Research into the speech and language abilities of nursery school children within one of the South Wales valleys found that the majority of children were performing well below their expected age ability on speech and language measures (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, 1998). Ward (2000) indicates that children whose language development is delayed are at high risk of developing educational, social and emotional problems.

Early experience has an effect on later development, and patterns of interaction can be set as early as three months of age (Brazelton, 1992). In the early stages, the main carers need to be attentive and responsive to their baby to facilitate this interaction. By supporting parents antenatally and giving them information on what the baby is capable of doing, the parents become proactive at the earliest stage. They feel involved and important which gives them confidence. If they form an attachment before the baby is born, they are more likely to interact with the baby as soon as it is born. In addition, we have found that antenatal parents are keen to learn and have been very receptive to new information.

Research suggests that a baby begins to learn *in utero*, and that this is an opportunity to increase maternal awareness and interaction prior to birth (Hodzic, 2002; Van de Carr & Lehrer, 1997; Verny 1981). Hodzic (2002) argues that stimulation during pregnancy will improve attachment as well as interaction between mother and baby. Studies indicate that the pre-nate is more capable than previously believed. There is evidence to show that, during the sixth month of pregnancy, the baby can see, hear, taste, experience, feel, remember and even learn (Verny, 1981). These concepts are explained to the parents and supported by cartoon material and research examples. They can relate the information to their own experience. For example, they are shown how the pre-nate communicates through kicking, what music is soothing for the baby, and how the baby responds to their voice when it is born.

## Original cartoon material

Vulnerable groups do not have access to information for a variety of reasons, issues with literacy being one (DH, 2001). We therefore felt it was vital that any information was presented in an accessible and accepted form where access of information was not dependent on literacy levels. For this reason we have used original cartoon material with minimal written text.

It is clear from the research and from our experience that parents and children in the local area require support to develop effective interaction skills. These skills can be learnt before the baby is born. A way of working needed to be developed which was accessible and attractive to this particular client group. With these points in mind we developed a pack to address the following objectives:

- support parent-baby attachment prior to birth
- support parent-baby attachment post birth
- establish good patterns of parent-baby communication from an early age
- provide the baby with maximum stimulation to aid their brain development, physical development and growth, hearing and communication skills (Verny, 1981)
- increase parents' self esteem
- involve family members
- reduce sibling rivalry.

'Your Bump and Beyond' consists of cartoon picture cards to show to mothers and their families, a handbook for the professional to use that explains each picture card, and activities that can be photocopied and given to parents to practise. The pack has been split into two main areas: learning before birth (figure 1) and learning as a baby (figure 2). All of the examples are fully referenced.

### Figure 1 Part one: Learning before birth

This pack consists of seven double-sided picture cards. The contents have been split into two sections: what your baby can do before they are born, and things to do to help your baby. The pack helps the parents to be aware that the baby is able to develop skills before they are born. It shows the parents ways of stimulating their baby that can help to give them a head start when they are born. This early parent-baby interaction aids attachment and early communication. This may prevent later difficulties, such as language delay, from developing. The following pictures illustrate the pictorial cards, and extracts have been taken from the handbook for professionals.

Your baby can hear before it is born



By 24 weeks of pregnancy, your baby can hear music and voices. Your baby does not like loud noises and will tell you so by kicking and moving. Your baby will move its body in rhythm to your talking. When your baby is born, it is calmed by the sound of your voice and other familiar voices. Newborn babies

can pick up their mother's and father's voice within an hour of birth. Tapes of a human heartbeat were played into a nursery with newborn babies. Those babies who heard the tape did better than those who did not hear the tape (they ate more, weighed more, slept more, breathed better and cried less).

Touch & rub your bump



Touching and rubbing your tummy will help your baby develop good physical skills and feel relaxed. It will also help you feel relaxed. Sing the 'Action Song'. This incorporates many of the ways you can help your baby before they are born - it involves singing, listening to music, touch and movement.



### Figure 2 Pack two: Learning as a baby

This pack consists of five double-sided picture cards. The information emphasises the importance of the birth environment and the need for the baby to be held and to hear a familiar voice. The content continues to focus on the ways parents / carers can communicate with their baby through touch and sound in the very early days. This has a positive impact on the baby and also the parents, and may help to increase attachment and parental coping strategies.

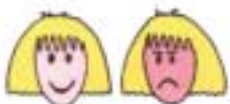
The importance of your time together after the birth



The first hour with your baby after they are born is especially important. It should be quiet with no distractions, avoiding bright lights. You should be as comfortable and relaxed as possible. Both mother and baby need time to recover. Relatives may need to be told to wait a while before they see you and

the new baby. You and one other close person to you should be alone with the baby for at least the first hour. Skin-to-skin contact is especially important. A baby that is laid on their mother's tummy will automatically inch their way towards the breast.

Your baby can understand facial expressions



All babies are different. They have different temperaments and levels of alertness and respond to change in different ways. By 72 hours, newborns can detect the difference between happy and sad expressions. Your baby will respond in the same way - if they see a happy face they will feel happy.

Ten midwives from one of the South Wales valleys have taken part in the pilot study since January 2003. Each was asked to use the packs with ten mothers. Evaluation forms were simple and asked for feedback from the midwife and the mother. To date, thirty evaluation forms have been returned (figure 3). The pilot has shown that the cartoon pictures have been received very well by the women and midwives and have potential for further use by other professionals. ▶

### Figure 3 Evaluation

#### FEEDBACK FROM MIDWIVES

Question	Response
<b>Has the pack been easy to use?</b>	
- Yes	30 (100%)
- No	0
<b>Has the pack been easy to understand?</b>	
- Yes	30 (100%)
- No	0
<b>In what setting have you used the cards?</b>	
- at home (one-to-one)	25 (83%)
- parent craft (antenatal group)	5 (17%)
<b>Who have you used the cards with?</b>	
- regular caseload	12 (40%)
- complex caseload	18 (60%)
<b>How did you use the cards?</b>	
- out of sequence	0
- sequentially	30 (100%)
<b>Has the pack aided you in the delivery of information?</b>	
- Yes	30 (100%)
- No	0
<b>Do you feel the client has benefited?</b>	
- Yes	28 (93%)
- No	2 (7%)

#### FEEDBACK FROM MOTHERS

Question	Response
<b>Is this your first baby?</b>	
- Yes	21 (70%)
- No	9 (30%)
<b>Did you learn anything new?</b>	
- Yes	30 (100%)
- No	0
<b>Did you try out any of the activities?</b>	
- Yes	28 (93%)
- No	2 (2%)
<b>Has the information helped your baby?</b>	
- Yes	27 (90%)
- No	0
- Don't know	3 (10%)

#### COMMENTS FROM MOTHERS

##### Question "Did you learn anything new?"

"I was aware in pregnancy that when I spoke my baby moved - that means he or she knows me."

"I had a mobile phone for Christmas and I kept the tune on that calmed my baby's movements."

"I talk all the time to my baby since you said it can hear me. I really feel as though I know her or him already, it knows me."

"After I went home (from hospital) and spoke, my baby turned towards me. I felt really important and loved, special."

##### Question "Has the information helped your baby?"

"My baby looks right at me when I speak."

"I always look at my baby when I speak."

"I have found ways of calming my baby just by singing and touching - my mam says I will spoil him but I don't listen."

One women with clinical depression commented:

"I felt very involved and important to my baby when I was pregnant. It made me feel good."

# resources

## About Cerebral Palsy

Scope has launched a free updating service for anyone interested in cerebral palsy.

'About Cerebral Palsy' will appear at least three times a year, and include features, interesting websites and information on new research and literature. It is available electronically as a pdf, or as a hard copy.

See [www.scope.org.uk/publications/aboutcp.shtml](http://www.scope.org.uk/publications/aboutcp.shtml) or contact the Scope Library and Information Unit on 0207 619 7342

## Talking Point

The Talking Point website continues to expand, with the addition of material on writing individual education plans, secondary education, supporting children with speech, language and communication difficulties, and evaluation of a training programme for early years settings. Regular 'Ask the panel' events including "Managing social development and behaviour in children and young people with speech, language and communication needs" are also proving popular.

[www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk) aims to be the first stop online for information on speech, language and communication difficulties in children

## Stroke and Aphasia

As well as providing easy to understand, comprehensive information, the new Stroke and Aphasia Handbook is intended as a tool to support people with aphasia in asking questions, having discussions and conversations, and making choices and decisions.

£23.50 inc. p&p (not-for-profit) from Connect tel. 020 7367 0840, e-mail [info@ukconnect.org](mailto:info@ukconnect.org)

## What about faith?

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities has produced a good practice guide for services on meeting the religious needs of people with learning disabilities. The guide provides practical advice on how services can support adults in their religious expression, and explains why it is important to take the religious needs of people with learning disabilities seriously. The Foundation's related publications include Why are we here?, What is important to you?, No Box to Tick and Religious Expression, a Fundamental Human Right

*What about faith?* is £45, from the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, tel. 020 7802 0304 or see [www.learningdisabilities.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk)

## Choice in healthcare

A six-monthly directory and website aims to provide independent information to people who want to make more choices about where they receive their NHS treatment. *nhs Family Choice* is published by Cyworks, see [www.nhsfamilychoice.com](http://www.nhsfamilychoice.com)

## Face Former

Distributors of Face Former, a functional muscle training device and programme developed by a German speech and language therapist in 1998, are hoping to expand its appeal to the UK and Ireland.

£34.99 with volume discounts from [www.faceformer.co.uk](http://www.faceformer.co.uk)

## Prenatal auditory stimulation

A product providing prenatal auditory stimulation has been relaunched in the UK. BabyPlus is a small digital audio unit worn on a belt around the abdomen when a mother is pregnant. It plays sequences of sounds with the aim of stimulating the baby's developing brain.

£145 inc. UK delivery, see [www.baby-plus.co.uk](http://www.baby-plus.co.uk), tel. 01869 253552

## Hearing aid toolkit

Defeating Deafness has produced a toolkit which tells people what to expect when getting hearing aids, how to make the most of audiologist visits and where the latest technology is headed.

[www.defeatingdeafness.org](http://www.defeatingdeafness.org)

## Diagnosis support pack

A Contact a Family pack aims to provide health professionals with practical suggestions on how best to communicate information and offer support to parents at or around the time of a diagnosis.

*The Support Pack for Health Professionals - Working with families affected by a disability or health condition from pregnancy to preschool* downloadable from [www.cafamily.org.uk/packs.html](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/packs.html)

## Voice software

Vocal Process's Jeremy Fisher has compiled a list of voice analysis software that can be used to produce spectrograms, some available as freeware or shareware.

See [www.vocalprocess.net](http://www.vocalprocess.net)

◀ The pack has also been informally piloted in a local antenatal group in a community flat. The group was set up to deal with the level of non-attendance (50 per cent) at the local antenatal clinic and parent craft groups. The pack was presented alongside creative activities such as making nursery rhyme books, crib pictures and mobiles. The use of the pack alongside practical ideas provided a forum for discussion and the involvement of other family members. At a recent group a sibling who had made a nursery rhyme book told her father, "If I sing to the baby, when it's born it will know who I am." The parents and children enjoy making resources for the baby and report that they find it relaxing. There is now mainly full attendance at these groups.

During pregnancy, parents are keen and enthusiastic to learn about ways to help their baby. If they learn to communicate with their baby at this early stage it sets up good patterns once the baby is born and helps to form positive attachments. Research suggests that early stimulation before the child is born can enhance the baby's brain development, physical development and growth, hearing and communication skills (Hodzic, 2002; Verny, 1981). By singing lullabies, as well as through simple interactive games, parents can establish strong prenatal bonding by conveying emotions like love (Hodzic, 2002).

We hope that this pack will provide an accessible, useful tool for midwives and other professionals to use with mothers-to-be, new mothers and families to support the dissemination of information.

*Your Bump and Beyond* was developed by Sasha Bemrose MSc, BSc (Hons), ACS, MRCSLT, MHPC, a specialist speech and language therapist employed by Surestart Rhondda Cynon Taff, Wales and Lynn Lynch MSc, BSc (Hons), RM, RN, FETCh a consultant midwife with North Glamorgan NHS Trust. Huw Evans was the cartoonist. It has been presented at the European Regional Conference Nurses Federation in Malta, at the Royal College of Midwives Conference in Cardiff and also at the Surestart Conference in Warwick.

## Resources

- 'Your Bump and Beyond' Antenatal Packs available from Children's Information Service, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon, Mountain Ash, CF45 4UQ, tel. 0800 180 4151. Cost £30 (with £3 p&p).
- SEAL - Society for Effective Affective Learning - [www.seal.org.uk](http://www.seal.org.uk), tel. 020 83653869.

## References

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- Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (1998) *Merthyr Tydfil Peoples in Community Document*.
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## REFLECTIONS

- DO I ATTACH SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO CLINICAL NETWORKING?
- DO I ENSURE CLIENTS AND CARERS FEEL INVOLVED, IMPORTANT AND CONFIDENT?
- DO I PROVIDE THERAPY AND MATERIALS THAT ARE EVIDENCE BASED?