

Supporting new families in the community



Many new families find themselves in need of support, especially with the closing of children’s centres across the country and increasing levels of poverty in some areas. How can you and your church support new families outside the church walls?



Donate to local and national support networks:

Baby Banks -

Research shows that, this year alone, more than 35,000 families have used baby banks to obtain vital items such as bottles, clothes, cots, nappies, wipes, prams and pushchairs. Comparable to food banks, baby banks give away basic baby items – largely donated by members of the public – that are crucial to people in need.

But the people using baby banks are not only families living in poverty or those on benefits but those escaping domestic violence, refugees, families affected by the switch to Universal Credit and even working parents who can’t earn enough to cover rent, food and utilities on top of the necessities required to bring up a baby.

Find a local baby bank: <https://www.goodtoknow.co.uk/family/where-to-find-your-local-baby-bank-458436>



Baby Basics -



Baby Basics is a volunteer-led project aiming to support new mothers and families who are struggling to meet the financial and practical burden of looking after a new baby. Baby Basics started in Sheffield in the spring of 2009, this centre continues to support families across Sheffield working with a wide range of frontline health and social care professionals. There is now a growing network of Baby Basics centres across the country each staffed by a committed team of volunteers.

Baby Basics provides much needed essentials and equipment to mothers and families who are unable to provide these items for themselves; including but not limited to teenage mums, people seeking asylum and women fleeing domestic abuse and trafficking. Working with midwives, health visitors and other professional groups to provide support directly where it is most needed, Baby Basics volunteers lovingly collect, sort and package a 'Moses Basket' of clothing, toiletries and essential baby equipment as an attractive gift to new mothers.

Find a local Baby Basics: <http://www.baby-basics.org.uk/>



Practical Help

Many families value actual personal/practical help during those last weeks of pregnancy and first weeks of parenthood. Many churches organise a rota to provide a new family with daily meals which can be easily heated up. This help should be offered with no agenda – families should not feel obliged or pressured to come to church or have their child baptised. There are lots of other ways a family can be supported if the help is welcomed – gardening, shopping, even helping with the other children or providing babysitting in the home while the exhausted new parents sleep! It is essential that any church offering such support ensures that volunteers are properly trained in safeguarding according to Good Practice 5 and have a DBS certificate.



Provide opportunities for mutual support

With many new parents managing without the support of extended families, a networking opportunity such as a Bumps and Babies group can be an invaluable way of reducing isolation and providing mutual support. Perhaps this is something you could set up in your church. Why not see the factsheet on this?

Resourcing other support groups with volunteers or space

Lots of local and national groups such as the NCT <https://www.nct.org.uk/> provide trained support for new families. Such groups are always looking for volunteers or for places to host their groups. Is this something that your church could provide?





Signposting and providing information

All the services and websites below are possible sources of support for new families in the community. Often the best thing a church can do to help a new family is to direct them to the right source of support within the community.



NHS services for new parents:

Registering your baby with a GP -

Register a baby with a GP as early as possible in case help is needed.

A pink card is given out when a baby's birth is registered which must be signed and given to the GP.

Some GPs will see small babies at the beginning of surgery hours or without an appointment, but be prepared to wait.

Some will give advice over the phone. Most GPs have regular child health clinics.

If a baby requires being seen by a GP before the birth is registered, they can still do so and complete the registration form at the time of the visit.

How your health visitor can help -

A health visitor will usually visit at home for the first time around 10 days after a baby is born. Until then, the local midwives remain responsible for the care.

A health visitor is a qualified nurse or midwife who has had extra training. They're there to help everyone stay healthy.

A health visitor can visit at home, or be seen at a child health clinic, GP surgery or health centre, depending on where they're based.

A health visitor can help if someone is feeling anxious, depressed or worried. They can give advice and suggest where to find help.

They may also have information about where there are groups of mothers who meet together regularly.

Child health clinics

Child health clinics are run by health visitors and GPs. They offer regular baby health and development reviews and vaccinations.

Some child health clinics also run mother and baby, parent and toddler, breastfeeding and peer support groups.

Local Authority Services:



Sure Start Children's Centres -

Children's centres are linked to maternity services. They provide family health and support services, early learning, and full-day or temporary care for children from birth to 5 years.

They also provide advice and information for parents on a range of issues, from parenting to training and employment opportunities. Some have special services for young parents.

Family Information Service -

A local Family Information Service (FIS) aims to help support parents by providing a range of information specifically for parents.

Each FIS has close links with children's centres, Jobcentre Plus, schools, careers advisers, youth clubs and libraries.

They offer information about local childcare services and availability, and can help locate childcare for a child with a disability or special needs.

Local Advice Centres -

Advice centres are non-profit agencies that give advice on issues such as benefits and housing.

You can search online for organisations such as:

- community law centres
- Citizens Advice
- welfare rights offices
- housing aid centres
- neighbourhood centres
- community projects

To help get the most out of services, remember:

- Before you go, think about what you want to talk about and what information you can give that'll be helpful. Maybe jot these ideas down.
- Unless your child needs to be with you, try to get a friend or neighbour to look after them so you can concentrate.
- If a problem is making life difficult or really worrying you, keep going until you get some kind of answer, if not a solution.
- If you don't understand, say so. Go back over what they said to make sure you understand. It may help if they write it down for you.

- If English isn't your first language, you may be able to get help from a link worker or health advocate. Ask your health visitor or staff at your local Sure Start Children's Centre if there's a link worker or health advocate in your area.



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Websites, Helplines and Support Groups for Parents -

Contact: for families with disabled children

Support, advice and information for parents with disabled children.

- helpline: 0808 800 355
- website: www.cafamily.org.uk

Family Lives

An organisation providing immediate help from volunteer parent support workers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- helpline: 0808 800 2222
- website: www.familylives.org.uk

Family Rights Group

Support for parents and other family members whose children are involved with or need social care services.

- helpline: 0808 801 0366
- website: www.frg.org.uk

Gingerbread: single parents, equal families

Help and advice on the issues that matter to lone parents.

- helpline: 0808 802 0925
- website: www.gingerbread.co.uk

Parent and baby groups

To find out about local groups:

- ask a health visitor or GP
- look on noticeboards and for leaflets at a local child health clinic, health centre, GP's waiting room, children's centre, library, advice centre, supermarket, newsagent, or toy shop

In some areas, there are groups that offer support to parents who share the same background and culture. Many of these are women's or mothers' groups.

Lots of children's centres also run fathers' groups and groups for teenage parents.

A health visitor may know whether there are any local groups like these nearby.

NCT -

Are the UK's leading charity for parents, for the First 1,000 Days - right through your pregnancy, birth and beyond.

They give accurate, impartial information through their website, courses and classes.

They'll bring together new parents in local communities, to make vital and lasting friendships.

They campaign to change the things that matter to parents, because they believe everyone can, and should, feel supported in becoming a parent.

Helpline: 0300 330 0700

Website: www.nct.org.uk

Babycentre

The BabyCentre vision: A world of healthy pregnancies, thriving children and confident parents.

BabyCentre is the world's number 1 digital parenting resource, with information and support that reaches more than 100 million people monthly.

In the UK BabyCentre helps 8 in 10 new and expecting mums and reaches out to 2.5 million people a month. They're the UK's most trusted and recommended parenting and pregnancy website, ahead of the NHS, according to a survey of an independent panel of mums.

They also reach out to where our parents spend their time, with 734,000 fans and followers across their social channels.

Website: www.babycentre.co.uk

