First 1001 Days Movement

INTRODUCTION

The First 1001 Days

Evidence Brief Series

The First 1001 Days Movement is an alliance of nearly 200 charities and professional bodies working together to campaign about the importance of the emotional wellbeing of babies. Together, we drive change by inspiring, supporting and challenging national and local decision makers to value and invest in babies' emotional wellbeing and development in the first 1001 days, from pregnancy to age two.

Every day, 2000 babies are born in the UK. There are over 1.4 million babies and toddlers under two across the country, and more yet-to-be-born. These children are our future.

One of the most important things that any society can do is to ensure that every baby and child receives the nurturing care they need to have the best start in life. Valuing and investing in our youngest children is the right thing to do. It is also critical in securing the future that we all want to see: one where children enjoy their childhoods, achieve at school, and go on, as adults, to progress in the workplace, develop positive relationships, contribute to their communities, and have a happy, healthy and fulfilling life.

The first 1001 days – from pregnancy to age two – is a period of uniquely rapid growth, when babies' brains, their sense of self, and their understanding of the world, are shaped by their experiences and environments.

The science shows us that children need nurturing care to achieve their full potential. This includes conditions that promote health, nutrition, safety and security, responsive caregiving, and the conditions for early learning.

As a Movement, we focus on promoting early social, emotional and cognitive development. These vital elements of early development are influenced by maternal mental and physical wellbeing in utero. After birth, the interactions and relationships that babies have with their caregivers are critically important.

Sensitive, responsive caregiving during the earliest years of life ay the foundation for later health and wellbeing, the benefits of which last a lifetime – and carry into the next generation.

Policies and local services play an important role in giving parents, caregivers and families the knowledge and resources to provide their babies with the nurturing care they need, and additional support if they are struggling. Stress factors, such as – but not limited to – domestic abuse, mental illness, substance misuse, unresolved trauma and poverty can make it harder for parents to protect, support and promote young children's development. Giving babies the best start in life, therefore, involves a two-pronged approach: both tackling adversity and supporting parents in their important role.

The Evidence Briefs

This series of six Evidence Briefs set out the case for action in the first 1001 days. Together, they tell the story of why the first 1001 days is so important, describe the factors that are necessary to optimise the wellbeing of our babies and young children, and explain the current state of government policy and services for families in the first 1001 days.

The briefs are:

1. **The first 1001 days: An age of opportunity**
2. **The state of babyhood: What life is like for babies in the UK today**
3. **The benefits of nurturing care: How early interactions influence many aspects of our development**
4. **A decade of disinvestment: The loss of services for babies in England**
5. **National and local variation in services for families in the first 1001 days**
6. **Investing in babies: The economic case for action**

A Call to Action

The Evidence Briefs provide a compelling case for national and local decision makers across the UK to value and invest in babies' emotional wellbeing and development in the first 1001 days in order to give every child a strong foundation in the earliest years of life.

Across the UK, we would like to see:

1. **Strategic commitment and leadership**
   A cabinet-level Minister in every nation, responsible for developing and overseeing the delivery of a clear and ambitious cross-government strategy for improving outcomes for all children, beginning in pregnancy.
2. **Investment**
   Clear, concentrated, sustained enhancements to funding across maternity, public health, children's services, and mental health services to make sure that babies (from pregnancy to age two) and their families get the support they need.
3. **Integration and accountability**
   Measures to encourage, incentivise and enable local services to work in partnership to develop and deliver integrated local strategies that give babies in their area the best start in life.
4. **A continuum of care**
   A range of services in every area, including universal, targeted and specialist services, public and voluntary sector services that support early relationships, improve family wellbeing and tackle stresses and adversity facing the family.
5. **Workforce development**
   Government action to ensure a well-trained workforce with the capacity, capability and skill mix to support children, parents and families during the first 1001 days.