



Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt, Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

1 March 2024

RE. The future of Start for Life and services that support babies

Dear Chancellor,

Ahead of next week's Budget, we urge you to provide certainty over the future of the government's Start for Life programme. We sincerely hope that funding for the programme will not end in a year's time, as currently envisaged.

Under Start for Life, half of local authorities in England have received funding to set up a Family Hub. We urge you to provide funding for the remaining local authorities, so that they too can create a Family Hub where parents and carers can access support.

We also urge you to continue to fund perinatal and parent-infant relationship services. £100 million of Start for Life funding was allocated to these services, but this ends on 1st April 2025. Half a dozen new specialised parent-infant teams have been established with this funding, and many more teams are now setting up. Parent-infant teams provide crucial support to parents who are struggling to bond with their baby. They work with families to provide sensitive nurturing care for babies, which is crucial for babies' healthy brain development.

Start for Life estimate that 10% of babies are vulnerable and at risk of 'disorganised attachment'¹. They need your help. Allocating £67.3 million of additional funding from 2025/26-2027/28 would allow every local authority area to develop at least one parent-infant team. We estimate this would reach 23,600 vulnerable babies with specialist support every year, by 2027/28.

If Start for Life funding ends as planned on 1 April 2025, some services will be forced to wind down. While politicians are fighting the General Election, professionals who work with babies may be re-deployed, leaving babies and families in the lurch. We share Start for Life's vision of a world, "where every baby is nurtured to fulfil their potential". We hope you will use the Budget to show your continuing support too for babies.

These are key recommendations of a wider 'Manifesto for babies' supported by more than 200 charities and professional organisations in the [First 1001 Days Movement](#). We note that the highest rate of economic returns comes from the earliest investments in children², but overall, investment in prevention has fallen over the last decade. This trend needs to change. As Start for Life guidance states;³ "Midwives and health visitors are well placed to identify a wide-range of issues, including

¹ p81 [Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

² [The Heckman Curve - The Heckman Equation](#)

³ P87 [Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)



perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationship difficulties.” These services need sustainable funding too. We urge the Treasury to recognise the full benefits of services that improve outcomes in both the short and long term, and across departments.

We would be happy to discuss the recommendations of our ‘manifesto for babies’ with you, at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Approachable Parenting
Best Beginnings
Centre for Early Child Development
Fatherhood Institute
Future Men
HomestartUK
Institute for Health Visiting
National Children’s Bureau
NSPCC
Oxpi
Parent-Infant Foundation

on behalf of the 200 charities and professionals working for babies in the [First 1001 Days Movement](#)

