



Hosting a MP visit - a guide

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Introduction

This guide has been written to support local services who are inviting their local MP to visit their service during Infant Mental Health Awareness Week 2025 (9th – 15th June 2025)

Why? Because although MPs can read policy papers and reports on the importance of the first 1001 days and the parent-infant relationship, nothing beats hearing it first-hand from the experts. Whether that is professional experts trained to understand the signs of distress in babies, who can help families provide sensitive nurturing care, experts with lived experience, or parents and carers who can talk about the positive difference the support has made to their relationship and to their baby's wellbeing.

Please let us know if you have further queries after reading the guide. Ben Curran, our Campaign Manager, would be more than happy to help. You can email him on ben@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk

Which MP should I invite?

MPs will only usually visit a service that is in their own constituency. So before contacting the MP do check who is the right MP for your service. You can check by entering the postcode for the location into this checker: [here](#).

It usually takes a week or two for emails to be replied to, and a follow-up phone call might be required too. MPs have a small office team and receive a large amount of correspondence, so do not be disheartened if you do not get a swift response, and email well in advance

When is good for MP visits?

Fridays are usually the best day for MP visits because MPs are in their constituencies rather than in parliament. If your MP suggests a different day, then it's worth asking whether it is likely they could be called to vote in parliament at short notice.

Obviously cancelling families at the last minute is not ideal, so organising visits for a Friday reduces the likelihood of a late cancellation.

We advise that you allow two hours in total for the visit. More detail is provided in the sample agenda below.

Who should attend?

Normally the MP will come with just one staff member. To ensure you build a good rapport, and are able to have a meaningful discussion, it is advisable not to overcrowd the visit with too many people attending.

In general, given there are also families and children, the best approach is to limit the number of staff attending and avoid attendees who do not have a clear role or something specific to contribute. This will allow the MP adequate time to meet families and babies, to hear about their personal experiences.

The crucial attendees are:

1. A service lead

The important thing here is that they can give an overview of the service, why it is important and how the service supports families.

For example, if the service is a parent-infant team, the clinical lead could explain the sensitive and specialist work that teams do. They can explain what infant mental health means, and how they recognise the signs of distress in babies. They can also explain the complexity of the work, and the severity of the trauma they may be helping families to address. Their work can be brought to life by talking through a case study, and explaining the range of interventions deployed. For example, showing how VIG is used.

2. A parent or carer with lived experience

Nothing is more impactful than hearing from a parent or carer the difference support has made to them and their baby. This may be someone who has been through the service

already and can therefore recall their struggles at the start of the work, and then articulate the positive difference the support provided made to them and their baby.

3. A baby

The participation of babies (and their parents or carers) is crucial! MPs love meeting babies. They could meet a family who has been through treatment and can talk about the experience, or a MP could join in a group session. Providing you have already arranged permission in advance, photos can be taken for use on social media or sent to local media (see section below on this).

4. A national policy lead

Ideally a policy lead from the Parent-Infant Foundation or from another First 1001 Days member charity will attend the visit, to discuss the wider policy context.

The policy lead can liaise with the MP's staff and discuss national policy developments like Start for Life, the government's Missions and wider policy context.

In the first instance, contact Ben Curran, our Campaign Manager, who will organise someone from the Parent-Infant Foundation or a member of staff from another First 1001 Days Movement member organisation. Ben's email address is ben@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk.

Also, if your service is based in a children's centre, family hub or other community centre, then the director of the centre might attend too, to explain how local services are organised and funded. You will need to adapt this according to your local context.

Social media and press

Please arrange for photos of the visit that can be used on social media or in newsletters, or potentially by local/regional newspapers.

The 'ideal' shot list is as follows:

1. Shot of the MP speaking with staff. This could be an 'action' shot during the meeting or a posed photograph.
2. Photo of the MP meeting babies and their families. In advance of the MP visit, please get written permission from families who are willing for their babies to be in photos. Your service/trust/centre's communications team should have a pro forma consent form, to obtain parent/carer permission. This should cover whether families are happy for the photos to be used on social media (by your service, the First 1001 Days Movement and the MP) and/or by local media (likely to be the local newspaper).

If you have permission to use photos with local media, then our team can liaise with the MP's office and your communications team in advance of the visit, to agree a press release.

The photos and the release will be sent to the local newspaper immediately after the visit, so the photographer needs to provide them immediately when the visit ends.

Below are two examples of good photos from recent MP visits that were used by local newspapers and on social media:



For local media, we have a template press release that we can send to local media ahead of the visit, adding a quote from you and from the MP. If you let us know at least a week before the visit then we can liaise with the MP's office to provide this to the local paper.

To allow the MP visit to be focused on the conversations with the service lead and families, we do not suggest inviting any journalists to attend the visit. Instead, we will send the local paper photos immediately following the visit (ideally the photo of the MP meeting babies).

Template email to invite your MP

Please feel free to copy us into your invite (or else forward to Ben Curran, our Campaign Manager: ben@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk)

Email Subject: Would you like to visit our service for Infant Mental Health Awareness Week?

Dear *MP NAME*

I am the service/clinical lead for *team/service name, address*, supporting babies and their families to build strong relationships and thrive. I'm writing to invite you to visit and meet some of our families, as part of Infant Mental Health Awareness Week (9th - 15th June 2025).

This year's theme is 'Who is holding the baby?'

Not everyone bonds easily with their baby. Parents who are overwhelmed by trauma, or struggling with mental or physical health difficulties, need support. More than one in ten babies in the UK today, are living in fear, confusion and distress. Without help, these babies are more likely to develop mental health conditions in childhood.

Our service makes a huge difference to parents and babies in "constituency" so we are keen to help raise awareness of the importance of supporting these early relationships.

Two hours would be an ideal time frame for a visit. This will allow time to explain the confidential and sensitive work that happens, as well as allowing time for you to meet with families and babies who have benefited from the service.

We would arrange for a photographer to capture your visit, so we have images to share with your constituents, to help raise awareness.

We are happy to work around your diary but hoped you might be able to visit during June, to coincide with the wider awareness campaign. The Parent-Infant Foundation team who run Infant Mental Health Awareness Week can also support with local media (if desired) and further information about the national campaign.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Best wishes,

NAME/PHONE

Sample agenda

DATE:

TIME:

VENUE:

Attendees (and contact numbers/email)

Xxx

Yyyy
zzzz

Timings

10.00 Arrival. *MP* to be greeted at the entrance by xxx

10.10 Room 1: Briefing on the local service:

Service/clinical lead gives an overview of *team name*'s work. This will provide an opportunity to discuss in a confidential setting some of the sensitive work that happens with high needs families – talk through case study or show example of VIG. Also (depending on attendees) centre director/manager explains origins of service, funding and future plans.

10:40 Room 2: MP joins a session to meet babies and parents. The session will be run by *name*. This is an opportunity for parents to talk with *MP* about their experiences.

A photographer will be present but will not stay for the whole session. We will ask families for prior permission for photography/video.

11.25 to 11.55 Back to Room 1: Tea/coffee and policy discussion.

An opportunity for *MP* to ask questions about local and national policy and offer reflections. National policy lead explains the national policy context.

Midday MP departs (photos and pre-approved press release sent to local media)