



Hosting a MS visit - a guide

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Introduction

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

Although MSs 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, or experts by experience - 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. Liz Gregory our Wales Development Lead would be more than happy to help. You can email her on liz@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk.

Which MS should I invite?

You can find a full list of MSs for your constituency by entering the postcode for the location into this checker: [here](#). This page will also show your local Westminster MP, but because health and social care is a devolved matter, we do not recommend inviting them to a visit in Wales.

It usually takes a week for emails to be replied to, and a follow-up phone call might be required too. MSs 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.

When is good for MS visits?

Fridays are the best day usually for MS visits because MSs are in their constituencies rather than in the Senedd. If your MS suggests a different day, then it's worth asking whether it is likely they could be called to vote at short notice. Obviously cancelling families at the last minute is not ideal, so organising visits for a day when the MS is in the local area 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 MS will come with just one member of staff. 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 MS 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 the 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! MSs love meeting babies and could either meet a family who has been through treatment and can talk about the experience or 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

A national policy lead: Ideally a policy lead from the Parent-Infant Foundation will attend the visit, to discuss the wider policy context. The policy lead can liaise with the MS's staff and discuss national policy developments like the Welsh Government's new **Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy** and the need for greater investment.

In the first instance, contact Liz Gregory, our Wales Development Lead, who will organise someone from the Parent-Infant Foundation or a member of staff from another First 1001 Days Movement member organisation. Liz's email address is liz@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk

Visits could also include a representative from another connected service (such as Family Engagement and Liaison Workers) or another member of the multi-disciplinary team. This could be a midwife, social worker, health visitor, or Family Liaison staff to talk about how professionals work together.

A senior manager for your NHS Board may attend, or if the service is co-delivered with a third sector organisation, a director of that organisation might attend to explain how local services are organised and funded. As there are different service models 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 and potentially by local/regional newspapers.

The 'ideal' shot list is as follows:

1. Shot of the MS speaking with staff. This could be an 'action' shot during the meeting or a posed photograph.
2. Photo of the MS meeting babies and their families. In advance of the MS visit, please get written permission from families who are willing for their babies to be in campaign 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 MS) 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 MS'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 in England that were used by local newspapers and on social media:



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

To allow the MS visit to be focused on the conversations with the clinical 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 MS meeting babies).

Template email to invite your MS

Please feel free to copy us into your invite (or else forward to Liz Gregory, Wales Development Lead, liz@parentinfantfoundation.org.uk)

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

Dear *MS NAME*

I am the 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. *MS* to be greeted at the entrance by xxx

10.10 Room 1: Briefing on the local service:

Service 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: MS joins a session to meet babies and parents. The session will be run by *name*. This is an opportunity for parents to talk with *MS* 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 *MS* to ask questions about local and national policy and offer reflections. National policy lead explains the national policy context.

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