

Baby and Me –  
using DVD to  
share knowledge  
with parents

At **Sure Start, Church Street (Westminster)** we provide a service for families from a wide range of cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. The main languages spoken in the area are Arabic, English and Sylheti.

The team is made up of a variety of health and other professionals who work closely with local agencies, pooling knowledge and resources to meet families' needs effectively.

As practitioners we are all working at some level to build parents' confidence and understanding of how best to interact with their child.



The message that we want to get across and share with parents, is that *they* are their child's first teachers, that communication skills start at birth, and that they are the people who can make a real difference to their children. Getting it right at the beginning will have long-lasting effects.

Our experiences as practitioners are that sometimes parents are not aware of the different abilities of very young babies. This can lead to even less interaction where a child has special needs.

It is estimated that 25 per cent of all new mothers in Westminster experience post-natal depression. At times, fathers can also display signs of depression. This can lead to less talk and interaction with babies which can, in turn, lead to difficulties with communication skills in later years. The early weeks and months are a good time to support parents' communication and interaction with their babies.

We thought that it would be a good idea to have a visual representation of what we want to promote and we decided that using film would be most useful.

We worked with local families and made a DVD, which shows parents and carers being the experts: talking with, playing and soothing their babies.

“The video shows simple,  
really easy things to do.”

**Could you:**

- use the *Baby and Me* DVD with your families – in groups, during home visits?
- make simple films of parent–child interactions with your parents to share at home, in settings or in services?

**The DVD is used in the following ways:**

- it has been shown and discussed at the Bengali Women’s Group
- it is available to rent at local libraries and toy libraries where Arabic- and Sylheti-speaking staff work
- it is shown at ante-natal classes and on the post-natal ward at St Mary’s Hospital
- it has also been shown to family therapists and a range of other health professionals at conferences.

**Future plans include using the DVD:**

- on a one-to-one basis with families at home
- as a focus in early years settings when children are talking about babies
- at drop-ins for families and childminders
- at a local group attended by Muslim women
- in the waiting area at the baby clinics in the Westminster area
- at local parenting groups and training courses
- in the training programme for childcare practitioners in the communication, language and literacy section of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- at Parents’ Evening at Westminster Children’s Society nurseries.

The *Baby and Me* DVD shows parents from the local community interacting with their babies. Simple tips are given which build parents’ confidence as their child’s first teachers – from the very earliest days. The importance of tuning in to a baby’s needs – consoling, touching, talking, listening, copying a baby’s vocalisations, waiting for a response and turn taking, following a baby’s lead, naming things of interest, using the home language, singing and playing are stressed. Simple explanations of how this helps to build brain connections to enhance the development of language and a healthy emotional bond are given, alongside delightful footage of babies and parents interacting. Parents are encouraged to have fun and give it a go.

The *Baby and Me* DVD (2007) is available from *The Children’s Project* (08450 94 54 94; info@socialbaby.com) and is produced in three languages: Arabic, English and Sylheti.



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