

Bonding with your baby

Helping children thrive

The bond (attachment, connection) is the unique emotional relationship between you and your baby. If a parent or carer is responsive to a baby's signals or cues and communicates with them from birth onwards, babies develop a secure attachment. Communication is the foundation of relationships and bonding and is essential for learning, play and social interaction.

Language (including body language) is how we get to know and bond with one another and build relationships. In talking and listening, we help our child develop and learn as well as make close connections.

What can I do to help my baby's communication?

By consistently responding to your baby's sounds, gestures and facial expressions, they should be developing the skills which are needed to begin using language by the end of their first year. Be positive and use praise, try not to use too much 'baby babble'. Read stories, rhymes and sing together. Talk to your baby about everyday things. Look at pictures and repeat words. Give them some of your undivided attention with your mobile phone and TV switched off.

If your child seems to be having difficulties chat to your health visitor or nursery nurse in the first instance, they may recommend Parenting Programmes or help you get more support if you need it.

Look out for signs of emotional attachment delays, including:

- They do not like to be touched or hugged.
- They are indiscriminately affectionate with strangers.
- They resist social interaction.
- They seem to want to be alone.
- They display intense anger.
- They can be destructive or aggressive.

If you suspect a child may have attachment difficulties they will require a specialist assessment. Talk to your health visitor, nursery nurse or GP.

1

My six month old baby is quiet, withdrawn and difficult to engage with.

2

Try the ideas in 'Top tips' when communicating with your baby.

3

Speak to your health visitor for further advice and support.