



What About The Children?

- speaking out for the emotional needs of children too young to speak for themselves



What About The Children? works to ensure that all children under three receive consistent loving care and for services that promote the development of a secure attachment.

'Raising awareness about the never-changing emotional needs of the under threes in our ever-changing society'



Why is it important to raise awareness about the emotional needs of infants?



Adverse childhood experiences have a significant impact on future mental health AND physical health

The well known risk factors are:

- Parental substance abuse
- Maternal drug and alcohol misuse during pregnancy
- Domestic violence
- Parental mental health problems
- Parents who have had poor childhood experiences themselves
- Poor attachment



Other important risk factors



- Stress in pregnancy
- Screen time
- Separation – raised levels of cortisol in infant
- Overuse of car seats and other baby carriers.



Do we need to 'raise awareness'



Prevention is better than cure

- 'Preventionomics'
- There is a clear economic advantage to get things right for babies. The cost of interventions later on are hugely expensive and less effective.



Do we need to raise awareness about the importance of the emotional needs of infants?



- In a survey carried out by What About The Children? 34% of mothers said that social and educational opportunities were more important than a close loving bond between child and carer.
- Key person does not in practice mean 'continuity of carer' in day care settings for under 3's
- Growth of use of electronic devices targeted at under 3s
- Opportunities for 'free play'
- Childcare policies that are about enabling parents to meet demands of their paid work.



What do we need to know?



- Baby Buggy Research – Zeedyk s. Research showed that in facing buggies, babies slept better, more eye contact more language interaction between infant and pusher
- Screen time, mobile phones, tablets TV – Arik Sigman
- Maternal stress during pregnancy especially the 1st trimester impacts on the foetus – Glover V.
- Separation from mother for long hours in group day care causes raised levels of cortisol in infant and even when no longer separated cortisol remains elevated.
- Restricted movement – car seats and other baby carriers have been shown to impact on physical and cognitive development.



What we do to raise awareness?

- Scrutinise policy and engage with policy-makers – APPGs, Government consultations,
- Host an annual conference & biennial Goodman Lecture
- Check out developments in practice
- Communicate findings on our website
- Search and summarise international research findings to inform our perspectives concerning emotional health
- Monthly Blog, Face book and Twitter
- Collaborations and coalitions with other like minded organisations



What About The Children?



- National charity established in 1993
- No political or religious affiliations
- Relies on donations and work of volunteers
- Website www.whataboutthechildren.org.uk
- Email: enquiries@whataboutthechildren.org.uk
- Tel: 0845 602 7145 (voice mail)



What About The Children?



- Policies and practice concerning children's should be driven by what we *know* (and can *learn*) is best for children –
- Policy and practice to do with babies, infants, children and young people should not be driven by economic pressures on adults or confused by the gender equality debate.