



Domestic abuse – the issue

- Around 1 in 5 children in the UK is affected by domestic abuse.
- Domestic abuse is quoted in 75% of Child Protection Plans and 60% of cases that lead to care applications, making it the highest ranking factor for children's safeguarding.
- Exposure to domestic abuse from conception to age 2 (a critical time as babies' brains are developing) can negatively impact IQ and emotional and physical development.
- Long-term life chances are profoundly affected. Consequences can include: underachievement at school; reduced employment chances; risky behaviours such as substance misuse; and inability to form secure relationships.
- Children exposed to domestic abuse are more likely to be abusive or experience abuse in their adult relationships, creating a cycle of trauma and risks to life chances across generations.
- The risks associated with domestic abuse can be reduced by protective factors in children's lives, especially by warm, secure relationships with parents or caregivers during infancy.

***For Baby's Sake* - a solution**

- *For Baby's Sake* is a programme that works in an integrated way with the expectant mother and father as co-parents, whether or not they are together as a couple, from pregnancy until their baby is two.
- The strengths-based programme uses a unique, three-way approach, delivered by practitioners working closely together to manage risks within each family member's journey. It is non-stigmatising and includes support to overcome shame.
- *For Baby's Sake* helps both parents to make lasting changes in their behaviours and overcome the impact of trauma and painful experiences in their own childhood. It also equips both parents to support the mental health and emotional development of their baby.
- The programme aims to break the cycle of domestic abuse and create the conditions for resilience, in order to give babies the best start in life, by providing the stability, support and nurturing conditions to allow the baby to flourish.
- The programme was launched in 2015 as 'Healthy Relationships: Healthy Baby'. In June 2017, based on feedback from service users on their motives for joining the programme, it was given a new name and a preceding strapline, '*Breaking the Cycle - For Baby's Sake*'.

Who we are

The Stefanou Foundation was established by Stelio Stefanou in 2007 using funds generated from the sale of his company.

The Foundation is using its own model of catalytic philanthropy, working in partnership to address the root causes of complex challenges to disrupt cycles of disadvantage, trauma and poor outcomes for individuals and families and across generations. It focuses on initiatives which prevent suffering and reduce risks for vulnerable members of society such as babies, young children and the elderly.

What is For Baby's Sake?

For Baby's Sake is an innovative programme created by the Stefanou Foundation in response to growing evidence of the life-long mental and physical health risks for babies born into families where there is domestic abuse. It is a free, intensive support programme lasting up to two and a half years for expectant parents where there is domestic abuse or violence in their relationship. Both mother and father join the programme during pregnancy and may be supported until their baby reaches age 2.

For Baby's Sake takes a unique approach to address the complex realities of abusive relationships, recognising that, in order to make long-lasting change, the needs, risks and motivations of both those experiencing and using domestic abuse must be addressed, in addition to the safeguarding and nurturing of the baby and any other children in the family. The mother and father are both supported with their parenting.

For Baby's Sake aims to break the cycle of domestic abuse and give babies the best start in life.

Why For Baby's Sake is needed

Around one in five children in the UK experiences domestic abuse during their childhood and this can have a profound impact on the rest of their lives.

Research has shown that exposure to domestic abuse in the critical first 1001 days of life, from conception to the age of two, is especially damaging for babies as they develop. This can start in the womb, when the stress hormone, cortisol, is physically transmitted to the baby from the mother and can reach dangerous levels. Scientists have identified early attachment as the foundation upon which future childhood, adolescent and adult relationships are formed. This hinges on caregiving by the parents during the first 1001 days. Domestic abuse can undermine parents' ability to provide the consistent, sensitive and responsive caregiving that babies and young children need, especially where the parents did not receive it themselves when they were children.

Domestic abuse is referenced in 75% of Child Protection Plans and 60% of cases that lead to care applications, making it the single biggest factor in social workers' caseloads. Many more children live with domestic abuse without their experiences or behaviours triggering a social services intervention.

Long-term life chances can be profoundly affected. Research showed that, by age 8, children exposed to domestic abuse from birth to age 2 had an IQ on average 7.25 points lower than those who had not been exposed to domestic abuse. Children who have lived with domestic abuse are more likely to: fail or under-achieve at school; be unable to keep down a job; take up risky behaviours in their teens, including substance misuse; and to end up in the criminal justice system. They are also less likely to be able to form secure relationships and maintain closeness with a life partner and are more likely to become perpetrators of abuse or experience abuse in their adult relationships, creating an ongoing cycle of trauma and reduced life chances across generations.

This life course is not inevitable, but the risks are higher, as are the risks of chronic conditions such as heart disease, respiratory problems, obesity and diabetes. Children who overcome the impact of domestic abuse will typically have had people very early in their lives with whom they formed secure relationships, which helped them to build vital resilience.



About *For Baby's Sake*

The Stefanou Foundation has worked with expert clinicians and multi-agency partners in two localities over five years to create a new kind of programme. Alongside the different evidence bases related to domestic abuse, trauma, mental health, behaviour change, parenting and perinatal/infant mental health, the Foundation looked carefully at the obstacles that typically prevent men and women from taking up help to address domestic abuse and/or mental health problems. These include feelings of shame, the frequent normalisation of abusive behaviour across generations, the stigma of mental health problems, the fear of being judged and, above all, the parents' fear of statutory agencies removing their children.

For Baby's Sake is a structured, modular programme which addresses these complex issues, working with both the mother and father as co-parents, whether or not they are a couple. Both parents join *For Baby's Sake* during pregnancy and are supported separately but in an integrated way to make significant and lasting changes in their behaviours, to overcome the impact of traumatic adverse experiences in their own childhoods, and to enable them both to support the emotional development of their baby. This support, which may last until the baby is 2 years old, enables the parents to bring an end to domestic abuse and give their baby the best start in life.

The programme was launched in 2015 with the working title of 'Healthy Relationships: Healthy Baby'. In June 2017, based on a growing understanding of parents' motives for joining the programme, it was named *For Baby's Sake*.

How *For Baby's Sake* works

For Baby's Sake uses a unique, three-way approach which is delivered by specially trained practitioners who work therapeutically to: end the domestic abuse; overcome the impact of the abuse; and nurture the development of the baby and any other children in the family. The practitioners in the team work closely together to manage the risks within each family member's journey, and act swiftly to address any safeguarding concerns that may emerge.

Feedback from parents is that they quickly become confident that *For Baby's Sake* will not judge them but will require, and empower, them to take responsibility for their own lives and for their baby's emotional, social and physical development. The programme works with each parent's motivation to change, especially their deep desire to be a good parent. It helps them to face up to past behaviours and experiences, including adverse childhood experiences and more recent domestic abuse. It empowers them with life skills to reduce stress and maintain healthy adult relationships. It supports both the mother and father to give their babies and children the consistent and sensitive care that leads to secure attachment and creates the conditions for lifelong resilience and fulfilment. Far from merely providing a sticking plaster, it is this three-way approach, helping all family members to address the causes and the impact of domestic abuse and trauma in their lives, that is more likely to succeed in breaking the cycle once and for all.

The potential financial benefits of *For Baby's Sake*

As well as improving outcomes for the individuals and families engaged in *For Baby's Sake*, the potential for the programme to save money for the public purse is also significant. For example:

- Stopping a child being taken into care could save an average of £52,676 per year, every year until the child leaves care, followed by further potential savings through improved life chances in adulthood (avoiding interventions by police, courts, prison, health service, mental health etc)
- Preventing an arrest, subsequent court proceedings and prison sentence could add up to a saving of £50,162 in the first year, with subsequent savings to the criminal justice and benefits systems etc
- Supporting a mother or father to build their confidence and return to work could save up to £25,111 per year in benefits



The impact of *For Baby's Sake*

When the programme launched (as Healthy Relationships: Healthy Baby) in 2015 in two prototype sites, Westminster and Hertfordshire, it became the UK's first whole family change programme related to domestic abuse, starting in pregnancy and embedded in local systems and services.

Feedback received from service users so far, and from those working in local services, gives us promising signs of the changes taking place for the men and women engaged in the programme:

- **Mothers and babies being supported to bond and form a secure attachment** *'I felt like I was babysitting my baby – now I feel like a mum'*
- **Men making changes in long-established behaviour patterns** *'I'm happy and proud – I can't believe I reacted that way - I've never stopped myself before from following through with a punch'*
- **Better outcomes for a mother and her baby** *'My baby and I are drug-free and I'm keeping my baby. I could never have done that without this programme'*
- **Parents valuing the long-term support provided by the programme** *'This is so different to any other service. I know they are not going to disappear when they think I'm 'fixed'. I have just felt abandoned too soon in the past and the changes I made did not last'*
- **Social workers noting the difference** *'In the case of this programme, the quality of intervention has been significantly more successful. For example, it provided, in one package, support to address the impact of parents' traumatic childhood experiences; domestic abuse in the parents' relationship; and learning about the psychological effect of domestic abuse on baby's development.'*

The effectiveness of *For Baby's Sake*, both social and economic, is currently being evaluated by independent research commissioned from King's College London. Their evaluation will bring together valuable learning about what has been working and why in the two *For Baby's Sake* prototype projects in Hertfordshire and in Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham. The researchers' interim findings, presented to the Foundation in June 2017, were highly promising.

Next steps

The Stefanou Foundation has waited until emerging evidence of the success of *For Baby's Sake* became available before starting to raise its profile significantly or to seek external funding. Until now, *For Baby's Sake* has been funded entirely from the Stefanou Foundation's own philanthropic resources and the promotion of the programme has been primarily at a local level with partners, stakeholders and potential service users.

The Stefanou Foundation's aim is to roll out the *For Baby's Sake* programme to more localities across the UK and continue to refine it as a model of best practice in achieving the effective and lasting change that breaks the cycle of domestic abuse and gives babies the best start in life.

In order to launch this next stage of the development of *For Baby's Sake* and ensure its sustainability, the Stefanou Foundation is seeking a number of external funders, supporters and ambassadors, with whom to form mutually rewarding partnerships.

The Stefanou Foundation will be holding meetings, round-table discussions and events with key stakeholders as part of its planning for the next stage in the development of *For Baby's Sake*. Through these discussions, the Foundation also wishes to contribute the learning from *For Baby's Sake* to current public policy debates about how to prevent domestic abuse from shattering lives and also about how to give vulnerable babies the best start in life.

Contact us To find out more about the Stefanou Foundation and the *For Baby's Sake* programme, please contact the Stefanou Foundation's Director: amandamcintyre@stefanoufoundation.org or **01707 329472**.

www.forbabyssake.org.uk

