

## NSPCC CYMRU/WALES BRIEFING:

### All Babies Count / Mae Pob Baban yn Cyfri Campaign

November 2011

The NSPCC has launched a new campaign, All Babies Count, to help prevent cruelty to vulnerable babies at the earliest possible moment. If vulnerable parents can access support and services to help them care for and bond with their babies, this significantly reduces the risk of the baby suffering neglect or abuse. We're calling on Government to work with us to make their commitments on early intervention a reality.

#### 1. Campaign overview

New NSPCC figures show that around **198,000 babies under one in the UK have parents who are affected by domestic violence, substance misuse or mental health problems**<sup>1</sup>. These babies face significant risk, and we can all do more to help them.

The scale of this problem is such that we can't keep babies safe on our own. That is why we're calling on everyone – the public, professionals and governments – to ensure that all babies count.

Babies need to be protected from physical harm – an average of 23 children under one are killed each year in the UK<sup>2</sup> – but they also need love, care and attention. Babies' brains develop and are shaped by interaction with other people.

Most parents want to do the best for their children. However, there are those parents who are more vulnerable and who find it hard to provide the care and attention their baby needs, and some who will abuse their children or leave them at risk of abuse. With the right support, the most vulnerable parents can be helped to care for their babies and keep them safe.

#### 2. Campaign background

No single factor causes babies to be abused, and singular explanations of child maltreatment don't do justice to the complexity of family life. However, it is clear **parental problems such as mental illness, domestic abuse and drug and alcohol misuse, can increase the risk of neglect or abuse.**

An analysis of serious case reviews held by the NSPCC library was conducted on 5 October 2011<sup>3</sup>. **The NSPCC collection contains 57 serious case reviews pertaining to Wales. Amongst these reviews, 23 involved an infant**<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, at least 18 of these cases identify one or more of the following as a factor: **parental mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse.** These figures are liable to be underestimates, as there can often be a limited amount of information provided within Executive Summaries. The NSPCC collection of serious case reviews is not comprehensive, rather it represents all the reviews we are currently aware of.

<sup>1</sup> Based on analysis of the National Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (2007), carried out for the NSPCC by Victoria Manning (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Kevin (ed.) et al (2011) *Homicides, firearms offences and intimate violence 2009/2010: supplementary volume 2 to crime in England and Wales 2009/2010 (PDF)*. London: Home Office. Scottish Government (2010) [Statistical Bulletin Crime and Justice Series: Homicide in Scotland, 2009-10](#) Edinburgh: National Statistics. From correspondence with the Police Service of Northern Ireland based on the publication Police Service of Northern Ireland (2011) [Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2010/11 \(PDF\)](#) Belfast: PSNI.

<sup>3</sup> 55 of these are Serious Case Reviews since 2006, 1 conducted in 2005 and the other 2004.

<sup>4</sup> NSPCC library contains 19 Serious Case Reviews involving a child younger than a year, and 2 cases involving children described as "one year old", one involving a 13 month old, and one a 16 month old.

### 3. What can the Welsh Government do to protect vulnerable babies?

If vulnerable parents can access support and services to care for and bond with their babies, and address their own problems, it hugely reduces the risk of neglect and abuse. We're pleased the Welsh Government recognises the need for early support for parents. But we're calling on them to work with us to make it a reality.

These are the three key areas where the Welsh Government can drive progress to safeguard and protect babies:

#### **NSPCC Cymru/Wales calls on the Welsh Government to:**

- 1. Ensure that their commitment to safeguarding through early intervention continues and that investment in the early years is strengthened.**
- 2. Acknowledge the critical role of universal midwifery and health visiting services in ensuring the safeguarding of babies through joined-up thinking and an evidenced-based approach to policy development and implementation.**
- 3. Develop and implement a strategy to highlight the vulnerability of babies and the prevention of non-accidental head injuries.**

- 1. Ensure that their commitment to safeguarding through early intervention continues and that investment in the early years is strengthened.**

We welcome the Welsh Government's acknowledgement of the long term benefits of investing in the early years in order to address inequality and generate savings in the longer term through earlier identification of needs. We also welcome the commitment to provide additional funding to the Flying Start programme and to double the number of children in receipt of this initiative across Wales.

However, we urge the Welsh Government to ensure that the focus on children and young people is not lost in the forthcoming changes as a result of the partnership rationalisation plans. Any integrated and outcome-based approach should ensure that early intervention, prevention and protection is embedded and through a commitment to early years investment, we are able to demonstrate the impact on the prevention of maltreatment of babies and young children.

We also believe that the forthcoming Social Services (Wales) Bill should provide an opportunity to reflect this commitment to early years and ensure that national and local arrangements to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people across Wales are not diluted in any way.

- 2. Acknowledge the critical role of universal midwifery and health visiting services in ensuring the safeguarding of babies through joined-up thinking and an evidenced-based approach to policy development and implementation.**

Universal midwifery and health visiting services play a critical role in efforts to prevent maltreatment during pregnancy and the first year. With this in mind, we strongly believe that child protection and safeguarding issues should be firmly embedded into policy developments that drive the implementation of such important services in Wales.

Parents should be supported to give their children a secure start in life. Universal midwifery and health visiting services play a critical role in identifying and responding to additional needs and risks that families may face. We welcome the Welsh Government's Vision for Maternity Services in Wales in recognising pregnancy and birth as an event of social and emotional significance yet we believe that this must now be translated into support for parents in their transition to parenthood, particularly those most vulnerable.

Safeguarding babies must be driven by collaboration and joined-up thinking within and between health professionals and their counterparts in departments responsible for safeguarding, early years, families and child poverty.

### 3. Develop and implement a strategy to highlight the vulnerability of babies and the prevention of non-accidental head injuries.

An analysis of serious case reviews held by the NSPCC library was conducted on 5 October 2011. **57 serious case reviews amongst a collection held by the NSPCC library relate to Wales. Amongst these reviews, 23 involved an infant<sup>5</sup>, of which 9 refer to suspected non-accidental head injury.** Again, these figures are liable to be underestimates, as there can often be a limited amount of information provided within Executive Summaries. The NSPCC collection of serious case reviews is not comprehensive, rather it represents all the reviews we are currently aware of.

Over the coming years we will develop and test an innovative portfolio of services, to better understand how to prevent poor parenting and abuse. This work includes developing and testing a new service that aims to prevent non-accidental head injuries in babies. This service is a primarily hospital-based parent education programme for parents of all newborn babies. Through the use of a DVD and other resources, this programme prepares parents for the immediate days and weeks after birth, suggesting ways to cope with pressures such as crying and sleeplessness and highlighting in particular the dangers of shaking an infant.

We believe that learning from this programme could effectively inform a Welsh Government strategy to highlight the vulnerability of babies and the prevention of non-accidental head injuries.

## 4. Services for children and families

The NSPCC has developed four pioneering new services based on leading international research, which are being launched at service centres across the UK:

- ***Minding the baby*** - an intensive home visiting programme developed at Yale University, which builds on the latest research about maternal and infant mental health. Children's services practitioners and nurses visit vulnerable young mothers from pregnancy until their child is two, helping them to develop healthy relationships with their baby as well as dealing with the practical side of caring for a new child.
- ***Preventing non-accidental head injuries in babies*** – a hospital-based education programme for all new parents, which involves showing them a DVD to help them cope with the stresses of having a new baby, and understand the dangers of shaking a baby. This programme draws inspiration from a similar programme in the US which achieved a dramatic 47% reduction in rates of Non-Accidental Head Injuries.
- ***Pregnancy, birth and beyond*** – a new eight session programme working with vulnerable and high risk expectant parents. Jointly delivered by health and children's services practitioners, this programme covers the social and emotional aspects of parenthood as well as the medical content of traditional antenatal education. In doing so it helps parents to prepare for the transition to parenthood and sets a template for effective parenting.
- ***Parents under pressure*** – this programme works with parents receiving drug or alcohol treatment who have a child under 2 in their full time care. Originally developed in Brisbane Australia, the programme has achieved positive impacts in reducing the risks of child abuse among methadone maintained parents. Over the course of the twenty week programme, PUP therapists work with mothers and fathers to help them build parenting skills and develop safe, caring relationships with their babies.

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<sup>5</sup> NSPCC library contains 19 Serious Case Reviews involving a child younger than a year, and 2 cases involving children described as "one year old", one involving a 13 month old, and one a 16 month old.

## 5. About the NSPCC

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) aims to end cruelty to children in the UK by fighting for their rights, listening to them, helping them and making them safe.

We share our experience with governments and organisations working with children so together we improve the protection of children and we challenge those who will not learn and change. We campaign for better laws and we educate and inform the public to improve understanding about child abuse.

Our services include the NSPCC Helpline, for adults worried about a child, and ChildLine, the UK's free, confidential helpline for children and young people.

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