

Bonding & attachment

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, a baby will 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.

When communicating with your baby hold them close and make eye contact. Smile and copy their facial expressions. This may turn into a good game! Copy the noises your baby makes. Sometimes you may find they 'answer' you! Sing songs to your baby. Older babies might enjoy games like 'peekaboo' and 'round and round the garden'. Talk to your baby about the things you are doing together.

Contact your health visitor and local children's centre for information about the activities they provide or if your child seems to be having difficulties.

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My six month old baby is quiet, withdrawn and difficult to engage with.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

Make eye contact and talk to your baby.

3

Speak to your health visitor for further advice and support.