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UNITED KINGDOM

*Speaker: Stacey Latchford
Specialist Midwife
Infant Feeding and Relationship building*

Little ones: Supporting parents to nurture foetal and infant relationships

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**Putting Patients First
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This webinar is designed for multiagency professionals to gain an understanding of the importance of early loving and responsive relationships between parents and babies through the first 1001 critical days.

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Learning outcomes

- To help pregnancy mothers connect lifestyle choices to their unborn babies development.
- Explain the importance of 'wiring up' brain development
- Show how a babies stress response is developed
- The impact of all of this on maternal and foetal relationships




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[Building Strong Brain Architecture | NSPCC](https://youtu.be/VoN-Gbmn7ws)

<https://youtu.be/VoN-Gbmn7ws>



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The Brain, Neurons and Synapses



The illustration shows a network of neurons on the left, with blue axons and pink cell bodies. On the right, a human head is shown in profile with a glowing pink brain inside, connected to the neural network.

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Neurotransmitters are released in the baby's brain and create brain connections

- Endorphins: 'Feel good'/pleasure
- Oxytocin: Love/bonding hormone
- Dopamine: Motivation/paying attention
- Serotonin: Improves mood/regulates emotions

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'Wiring up' the brain

Thinking brain

Emotional brain

Primitive brain

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How parents 'wire up' their baby's brain

- Love 'wiring' (so baby feels lovable)
- Stress 'wiring' (so baby can handle stress)
- Speech 'wiring' (so baby can communicate)

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Parenting begins in pregnancy

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Maternal Diet and the Unborn child

- A healthy varied diet
- Nutritious snacks
- Link between poor maternal diet and obesity
- Additional risks of poor nutrition pre-birth
- www.firststepsnutrition.org



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Smoking in pregnancy

The supply of oxygen to the unborn child is restricted and increases the likely hood of:

- Stillbirth
- Premature delivery
- Low birth weight
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Smoking in pregnancy can have life-long effects on the child including an increased risk of:

- Asthma
- Aggression and behaviour problems in the teen years
- Developing diabetes and cardiac disease later in life
- The child is more likely to become a smoker themselves.

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Maternal representations

Maternal representations refer to the way the pregnant mother thinks and talks about her baby around mid-term in the pregnancy, and indicate her level of bonding with the unborn child.

Factors which influence maternal representations are:

- more than 2-3 children under 7 years in the household
- childhood maltreatment
- domestic violence
- prenatal health
- maternal education
- social support
- substance use.

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Maternal stress

The transition to parenthood can be stressful for all sorts of reasons, such as changing body, feeling out of control, possible disruption to relationships and whether the baby was planned or not.

Promising research shows the effect of prenatal stress on the baby's hippocampus can be repaired with attentive postnatal care.


Practical ways a mother-to-be can manage stress are:

1. deep breathing
2. mindfulness exercise
3. stroking her bump.



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Tips for bonding in the womb

- Thinking about baby as a real person.
- Giving baby a name or nickname.
- Telling her baby how much she looks forward to meeting them.
- Keeping a picture of the latest baby scan where the parents can see it.
- Finding photos of themselves as a baby and imagining what baby may look like.
- Some parents find knowing the gender of their child pre-birth helps them to bond.
- Music stimulates the baby's developing brain and is also comforting both in the womb and after birth.
- When baby kicks, try rubbing the bump in response to show her baby she has noticed. This is the first way parents get to communicate with their unborn baby.
- Having a 'bad day'? The baby will pick up on its mother's emotional state. If feeling stressed, encourage the mother to try breathing in and out deeply whilst stroking her bump and telling their little one they're quite safe.



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Address the elephant in the room



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Please add any questions into the comment box and these will be answered at the end of the seminar

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