

Clear Sky's Baby Bonding Programme at Elizabeth House Nursery



Kez Black, Clear Sky therapist,
in conversation
with Kim Knight,
Nursery Manager

Kez:

Can you give me an overview of Elizabeth House, your role here and what plans the nursery has for the future?

Kim:

Elizabeth House is a family-run nursery. I am the Deputy Manager. Our plans and hopes for each of the children are to meet their needs as individuals, and also, as much as possible, to meet the needs of their families and the wider community.

Kez:

There are a lot of working parents at this nursery. What sort of needs do parents at Elizabeth House have in terms of parenting skills/support, if any?

Kim:

Parents at Elizabeth House need the nursery to be a reliable space where they know their children are well looked after, and where they feel they can rely on the nursery's support. As much as possible, we want there to be really healthy bonds and attachments so that both drop-off and pick-up at nursery are easier, and so that there is a strong sense of trust between parents and the nursery.

For parents with busy working schedules, another important form of support is flexibility, such as being able to access ad hoc drop-in sessions on days when their children would not normally attend nursery.

Another key area is supporting school transitions. This includes linking with the reception teachers and schools that children will be moving on to, so that the transition into school is as smooth and easy as possible.

What did you know about Clear Sky, if anything, before this Baby Bonding parent group?

I knew a bit about Clear Sky before the Baby Bonding course, but my understanding was more that Clear Sky's work was around mental health, specialist one-to-one support, and work with older children, rather than younger children and babies.

Seeing the Baby Bonding course being run helped me realise that Clear Sky offers more than I had previously understood. It showed me the more holistic side of the work, including early years work, group-based support, and support that is not necessarily purely from a mental health standpoint.

We were so pleased to have been able to deliver this Baby Bonding group to parents at Elizabeth House, thank you. Did the course meet your expectations?

Yes, the course did meet my expectations, although I was unsure what to expect at first. I had thought it might be more about talking through theory, but seeing the course set up and delivered helped me understand how it works in practice. The way the information was trickle-fed was helpful, because it meant the course was not just an overload of information. There was a clear structure, but it also felt very relational. As a practitioner, you allowed the mums to come and simply “be,” which felt really useful, especially for mums on maternity leave who may be looking for connection, reassurance, and a chance to chat, as well as practical support.

The course felt tailored and responsive to the specific needs of the parents in the room. For example, when one parent did not have childcare for an older child and needed to bring them along, you responded flexibly and created a bigger picture around the session, rather than rigidly sticking to the programme. That adaptability worked really well.

Finishing with the songs, props, and practical elements helped to bring the course to life. Those small details made the content feel accessible and meaningful. I think if parents knew beforehand what the course actually looked and felt like, it might help more of them to come along.

The two parents who attended regularly really benefited from the course. They needed reassurance, and the sessions seemed to give them that.

Would you recommend the Baby Bonding course to other nursery settings? Which sort of people/groups do you think the course is best suited to? Thinking about the needs of the parents here, do you think the course content was appropriately balanced and pitched?

Yes, I would recommend the Baby Bonding course to other nursery settings.

I also think it could be particularly valuable for health visitors, especially when they are going into families' homes and working with parents who may be struggling with day-to-day life, including parents experiencing postnatal depression or needing extra emotional and practical support.

Getting into communities can sometimes be harder through nurseries alone, so there may be real value in linking the course with services that already have direct contact with families. Even so, I would definitely recommend it to other nurseries as well.

In terms of the balance and pitch of the course, I think the content was appropriate. It was not just an information overload; the information was shared in a way that felt accessible and manageable for parents.

I also think there would be real value in staff being able to learn from the course too, particularly staff working directly with babies. Unfortunately, due to staffing levels and the baby-to-staff ratio, we did not have capacity for staff members to drop into the parent sessions. However, in the moments when I was able to observe parts of the sessions, I found that I was learning a lot, even after many years of experience working in nurseries.

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Did you think there was anything missing or anything of less value in the course content?

There was not anything in the course content that felt missing or of less value. The main thing was that it was a pity that only a few parents were able to attend. If more parents had been able to come along, the course would have been even more valuable, both for the individual parents and for the nursery community as a whole.

Do you think that those parents who attended were given sufficient time and support in the sessions? Or do you feel that they would benefit from longer or more sessions?

Yes, the parents who attended were given sufficient time and support within the sessions. The six-week structure worked well as an initial course, giving parents time to build familiarity, receive reassurance, and begin putting the ideas into practice.

There could also be value in offering further opportunities for consolidation after the six weeks. For example, after an initial weekly course, it may be helpful to offer follow-up sessions on a monthly basis so that parents can revisit the ideas, ask further questions, and continue to feel supported as their babies develop.

Do you have any specific feedback on the course content itself, or anything you've had fed back from the parents?

The parents fed back that they thought the course was great. They were very impressed with your knowledge, and they experienced the course as family-focused and practical.

The course seemed to give parents confidence in how to manage and respond to their babies. They were very grateful for the support, and the feedback was that they would have continued attending if the course had carried on.

It was also notable that the two regular parents were very different from one another, and the course was adapted and tailored to meet each of their needs. This helped the support feel relevant and responsive, rather than generic.