

## ICON for Midwives during Covid-19 Outbreak

### 'babies cry, you can cope'

To be read in conjunction with letter to midwives from national clinical director for trauma and the ICON leaflet.

The aim is to acquaint all new parents with the ICON message, particularly targeting the involved men, and signpost them to resources they can access when they need help.

Please print the attached leaflet and add local contact information in the appropriate area.

The proposed actions are as follows:

- If possible talk to the **father** or other involved male
- **Read** through the ICON leaflet with them, point out key messages (see below).
- Encourage them to **photograph** the leaflet so they have the image on their phone.
- Point out the **website** information and **social media** links that they may find useful in time.

Included below is a script that provides a useful example of how to have the conversation. This conversation takes an average of 6 minutes.

Many thanks for your involvement.

ICON: babies cry, you can cope.

The National Major Trauma Network



### **Hospital based intervention: key talking points**

This intervention should last no longer than 6 minutes of professional talking time. Obviously different parents will have different questions and the intervention may take longer with some than with others.

This is the most important time to discuss this topic with male partners and every effort should be made to deliver this short intervention when the male partner is present before discharge home from the postnatal ward making sure they are as involved as possible and that questions are directed to them as well as to the mother.

You will need:

- The ICON leaflet

#### **Step One: Infant crying is normal and it will stop**

Start with 'Hello my name is.... Before you go home with your baby I just want to spend 5 minutes chatting with you about why and when babies cry and give you some information to take home with you'.

Ask what the parents/partners know about why babies cry and whether they knew that increased crying between 2 and 8 weeks is normal.

Go through the leaflet starting at the beginning and emphasising that it is normal for babies to cry more frequently from 2 weeks, reaching a peak at 6-8 weeks then starting to cry less and less each week.

Acknowledge that a baby's cry is designed to get your attention and can be frustrating and worrying.

Highlight that if they are worried their baby is not well or need some reassurance, they can talk with their health visitor, midwife or GP.

## **Step Two: Comfort methods can sometimes soothe a baby and the crying will stop.**

Talk about ways to comfort a crying baby. Ask what methods the parents/partners have tried or thought about trying to comfort a crying baby? If they are an experienced parent ask what methods they have tried in the past and what they find works. Talk through the techniques referred to in the leaflet.

Again remind the parent that if they are worried that the crying won't stop, it's OK to check it out with a health professional/provider, (midwife, health visitor, GP, NHS 111).

Mention that sometimes, a baby will continue to cry for no obvious reason and their job as a parent/carer is to learn how to cope with it.

## **Step Three: It's OK to walk away if you have checked the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you.**

Refer to the leaflet and provide reassurance that not being able to stop a baby crying does not mean a parent/carer is doing anything wrong or that they have a 'bad' or 'naughty' baby.

Discuss ways a parent/carer might take their mind off the crying. Ask, what they think might work for them and refer to the leaflet for some examples.

Make sure you emphasise that the parent/carer must make sure the baby is safe before walking away and that they go back to check on baby after a few minutes when they can feel themselves calming down.

Emphasise the need for parents to find time for themselves to help them cope through what can be a really stressful time for all parents/carers.

## **Step Four: Never ever shake or hurt a baby.**

Suggest to the parents that it is really important that they share this information with everyone who looks after their baby as it's not only parents who get frustrated by a baby's cry.

Refer to the leaflet 'What not to do' and point out how parents and people looking after babies can sometimes get so angry and frustrated with a baby's cry they lose control and shake their baby which is highly dangerous leading to life long injuries and potentially death.

Suggest to parents/carers that they check that caregivers understand about how to cope with crying before leaving their baby with them.

## **Finally: ICON – babies cry you can cope**

Go to the ICON logo at the back of the leaflet and run through the acronym to reiterate everything you have just said. Point to the section of the leaflet about information and support.

Ask parents if they have any questions.

The ICON message is summarised below and a graphic showing the 'crying curve' is proven as a powerful tool in emphasising the normality of infant crying.

# ICON

Babies Cry, You Can Cope!

**I**nfant crying is normal and it will stop!  
 Babies start to cry more frequently from around 2 weeks of age.  
 The crying may get more frequent and last longer.  
 After about 8 weeks of age babies start to cry less each week.

**C**omfort methods can sometimes soothe the baby and the crying will stop.  
 Think about are they:

- hungry
- tired
- in need of a nappy change

Try simple calming techniques such as singing to the baby or going for a walk.

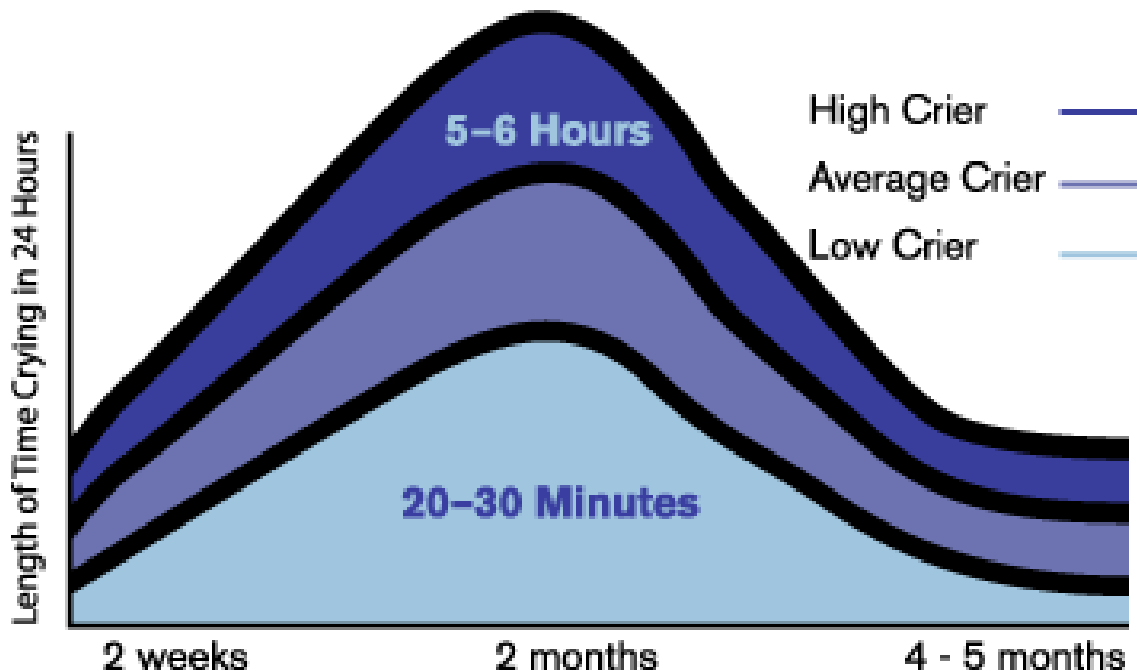
**I**t's **o**k to walk away if you have checked the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you.  
 After a few minutes when you are feeling calm, go back and check on the baby.

**N**ever, ever shake or hurt a baby.  
 It can cause lasting brain damage or death.  
 If you are worried that your baby is unwell contact your GP or call NHS 111.

Speak to someone if you need support such as your family, friends, Midwife, Health Visitor or GP.

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## Curves of Early Infant Crying 2 Weeks to 4 - 5 Months



(Barr, R, G., Hopkins, B., Green, J, A. (2000) Crying as a sign, a symptom and a signal: clinical, emotional and developmental aspects of infant and toddler crying. London: MacKeith Press.)