



CROYDON START FOR LIFE OFFER

Information and services for parents-to-be and parents and carers with children aged two and under.

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INTRODUCTION

Giving a child the 'best start' begins before birth, with good maternity care. Pregnancy and the early years offer a unique opportunity to shape our children's lives. If a child receives appropriate support during their early years, they have a real chance of maximising their potential.

The Start for Life offer provides support to parents and carers from a child's conception until their second birthday. The first 1,001 days are a critical time in the development of your child's life.

The offer is part of the new Family Hubs' approach to children, young people and families across Croydon.

Key Start for Life services

- Midwifery and health visiting services
- Infant feeding support
- Parental mental health support and parent-infant relationship support
- Parenting support

As well as:

- Safeguarding
- Services relating to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

For information on local services for children, young people and families visit:

www.croydon.gov.uk/finding-support

You can also find useful advice and search for local services on the NHS website at:

www.swlondon-healthierttogether.nhs.uk



SECTION 1: BABY ON THE WAY

If you are expecting a baby, you may have many questions. Read this section to find out about:

Preparing for your baby

Staying healthy during pregnancy

Mental health support

Support for families

Preparing for your baby

Midwifery services

Antenatal care is the care you get from health professionals during your pregnancy. It is sometimes called pregnancy, midwifery or maternity care.

This care is given by a midwife or sometimes a doctor who specialises in pregnancy and birth (an obstetrician).

It is best to start your antenatal care as soon as you know you are pregnant, but no later than the tenth week of your pregnancy. This will help keep you and your baby healthy.



To receive antenatal care, you can:

- Speak to your GP (general practitioner doctor)
- Self refer directly through Croydon Health Services website:



www.croydonhealthservices.nhs.uk/refer-yourself-to-croydons-maternity-services

Your GP can:

- Give you advice on medical conditions
- Give Preconception advice
- Help you with any other concerns you may have

Your midwife can:

- Explain how maternity care works
- Let you know what other support is available

To find out about local maternity services, visit:

www.croydonhealthservices.nhs.uk/maternity-services

Staying healthy during pregnancy

General advice and guidance

Better Health – Start for Life is a NHS website. It provides advice and guidance for having a healthy and happy baby including:

- Week-by-week guide to pregnancy
- Preparing for labour and birth
- Feeding your baby
- Weaning
- Your mental health
- Baby basics
- Early learning and development
- Bonding with your baby
- And much more.

www.nhs.uk/start-for-life

Eating healthy

To get all the vitamins and minerals your body needs during pregnancy, eat a healthy and varied diet.

To find out what you need for a healthy pregnancy, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



Healthy Start scheme

The NHS Healthy Start scheme can help you to buy fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk and infant formula.

To be eligible, you must:

- Be more than ten weeks pregnant or have a child under four
- Receive certain benefits or are pregnant and under the age of 18

Once on the scheme, you will receive a prepaid card that is topped up with payments every four weeks. You can use it in most places that sell healthy food and accept Mastercard payments.

You can also get free Healthy Start vitamins.

To check your eligibility and to apply online, visit:

www.healthystart.nhs.uk



Mental health support

Perinatal is the time from when you get pregnant up to two years after you give birth.

Taking care of your mental health during this time is important for both you and your baby. If you are feeling low or anxious, there is plenty of support available.

Speak to your GP or midwife as they can help or direct you to other services based on the level of care you need. For example, they may refer you to the perinatal mental health team or direct you to more informal peer support groups.

Information and support

- **NHS** – information about relationships after having a baby
www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/support-and-services/relationships-after-having-a-baby
- **Mind in Croydon** – charity that promotes good mental health and provides mental health services
www.mindincroydon.org.uk
- **Helix** – a specialist therapeutic service for women and birthing people who live in Croydon and who are experiencing emotional distress, or mental health

difficulties following a perinatal loss.

slam.nhs.uk/service-detail/service/healing-experience-of-loss-and-trauma-service-295

- **SLAM (South London and Maudsley NHS)** – perinatal mental health team that provides services for pregnant and postnatal women with severe mental illness
slam.nhs.uk/service-detail/service/perinatal-service-128
- **Tommy's** – charity which provides an online tool to create a wellbeing plan to help you look after yourself during and after your pregnancy
www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/calculators-tools-resources
- **Croydon NHS Talking Therapies Service** (formerly Improving Access to Psychological Therapies service (IAPT)) – a free and confidential service that is available to anyone aged 17 and over who is registered with a Croydon GP or living in Croydon
www.croydontalkingtherapies.nhs.uk

Support for families

Parent and Infant Relationship Service (PAIRS)

PAIRS provides local support to parents-to-be and parents of babies up to two years to help them build stronger bonds and positive relationships with their babies. It also helps you to gain a deeper understanding of parenting styles and how to meet your baby's emotional and developmental needs.

[croydondropin.org.uk/
wp-content/uploads/PAIRS-
Leaflet.pdf](https://croydondropin.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/PAIRS-Leaflet.pdf)



SECTION 2: BABY'S FIRST YEAR

The first year is packed with milestones, both rewarding and challenging. Read this section to find out about:

Registering the birth

Health visitors

Breastfeeding/feeding your baby

SEND support

Mental health support

Your baby's development

Registering the birth

It is a legal requirement to register a birth within 42 days of your baby being born. You will need a birth certificate when applying for any benefits related to the birth of a newborn.

You must have an appointment to register a birth at Croydon Register Office. They do not allow walk-in appointments.

www.croydon.gov.uk/births-deaths-marriages-and-citizenship/births/registering-birth-step-step



Health visitors

Health Visiting Service

A health visitor is a registered nurse or midwife who is also trained in public health nursing. They will support you until your child is five and can provide a range of services, such as:

- Health reviews
- Parenting support
- Nutrition and breastfeeding support
- Support to prevent ill health

Your midwife will usually hand over to your health visitor around two weeks after the birth.

www.croydonhealthservices.nhs.uk/health-visitors

Vaccinations

To find out about what vaccinations your baby needs and when to get them, visit:

www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/booking-your-childs-vaccination-appointment

Breastfeeding/feeding your baby

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the healthiest way to feed your baby. There are important benefits which breastfeeding provides for both you and your baby.

However, it is a skill that can take time to develop.

If you are struggling to breastfeed or have any questions or concerns, speak to your midwife or health visitor, or join a local breastfeeding support group.

www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/feeding-your-baby/breastfeeding



Croydon NHS Breastfeeding support

If you are having problems breastfeeding a baby, the Croydon NHS breastfeeding support service offers expert, practical support and information in a relaxed, unhurried environment.

They can also help with:

- Deciding how you feed your baby (if you are just getting started)
- Meeting other breastfeeding mums
- Breastfeeding in public
- Returning to work (if you are unsure how to continue)
- Expressing breast milk
- Baby-led weaning
- Introducing solids
- Breastfeeding an older baby or toddler
- Stopping breastfeeding

www.croydonhealthservices.nhs.uk/community-breastfeeding-support

SECTION 2: BABY'S FIRST YEAR

Feeding advice

Babies feel more secure if most of their feeds are given by their parents or main caregiver, especially in the early weeks, as this helps with bonding.

For more information, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



Healthy Start scheme

See [page 6](#) for information on the Healthy Start scheme.



Weaning

Introducing your baby to solid foods, also referred to as weaning or complementary feeding, starts when your baby is around six months old.

Your baby should have a varied diet, alongside their usual breast milk or first infant formula.

It can be confusing to know when and how to start introducing solid foods. For expert NHS advice, helpful videos, tips from other parents, and lots of simple, healthy weaning recipes and meal ideas, visit:

www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning

Sex and contraception

It is possible to become pregnant again three weeks after the birth of your baby. For advice on sex and contraception, visit

www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/support-and-services/sex-and-contraception-after-birth

www.croydonsexualhealth.nhs.uk

SEND support

If you have any concerns around your baby and SEND (special educational needs and disabilities), speak to your health visitor or GP.

See [page 20](#) for more information on SEND.

Mental health support

See [page 7](#) for information on mental health support.



Your baby's development

Why it matters

Every baby is unique, but the science is clear: In the first 1,000 days of life, your baby's brain develops faster than at any other time. Early moments matter and their effects can last a lifetime.

www.unicef.org/parenting/child-development/your-babys-developmental-milestones

Children's Centres

Children's centres offer services, activities and support for families with children under 5.

To find your local centre, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



SECTION 2: BABY'S FIRST YEAR

Play

Play is very important for the mental and physical development of your baby. There are many ways to play with your baby that does not cost money, including:

- Looking at books and singing songs and nursery rhymes – it's fun and will help your child to develop language and communication skills
- Using things that you've already have lying around the house
- Getting involved – your child will learn more from you than they will from any toy

For more information, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



Sleep

Understanding your baby's sleep pattern and needs will help you prepare for a schedule that is different to your own.

Some babies sleep more than others. Your baby will have their own pattern of waking and sleeping, and it's unlikely to be the same as other babies you know.

The NHS has information on helping your baby to sleep and reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

- **NHS** - helping your baby to sleep
www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/caring-for-a-newborn/helping-your-baby-to-sleep
- **Basis (the Baby Sleep Information Source)** - project run by the Durham Infancy and Sleep Centre (DISC), Durham University. Its website presents research evidence around how infants sleep and discusses external factors that can affect how they sleep.
www.basionline.org.uk

Baby crying

All babies cry, and some cry more than others. Crying is your baby's way of telling you they need comfort and care. For advice on how to soothe a crying baby, visit:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/caring-for-a-newborn/soothing-a-crying-baby

To access NCT advice, click [here](#) scan the QR code.



Building a relationship with your baby

Building a relationship with your baby helps to:

- Provide them with a happy and healthy life
- Make them more confident
- Create a strong bond between both of you

If you are worried about your relationship with your baby, talk to your health visitor, midwife, children's centre or GP. They can offer support and guidance and direct you to local services that can help.

Creating a strong bond with your baby can take time, but it will make you and your baby feel happier and healthier.



SECTION 3: TODDLERS

There are plenty of services available as your child develops from infancy to being a toddler. Read this section to find out about:

Your toddler's development

Health and toddlers

Mental health support

Parenting support

SEND support

Your toddler's development

This NHS website has lots of useful information – from helping your child learn to talk by chatting, reading and playing together, to encouraging them to be physically active:

www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/toddler

Language and learning

Your child will start to recognise more words than they can say at this age, so every conversation, game or story will be supporting their language development.

Try to respond to their babble and pick out and expand on words they are saying. This will help them to become a more confident communicator.

www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/toddler/learning-to-talk/learning-to-talk-1-to-2-years

Chatterbox Groups

These are groups for families who have concerns about their child's talking, communication or interaction.

They are run by the Chatterbox team, which includes speech and language therapists, assistants and children's centre staff.

The groups are for children aged four and under. They are designed to promote, encourage and support speech, language and communication development.

The sessions are delivered in children's centres across Croydon.

For more information, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



Health and toddlers

Oral health

A regular dental routine, from brushing their first tooth to their first trip to the dentist, is essential for good dental health. To find out more, visit:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-teeth-and-gums/taking-care-of-childrens-teeth

Weight and nutrition

HENRY is a service provider that runs various activities and programmes supporting parents to give their child under seven a healthier start to life.

It offers a free eight-week Healthy Families Brighter Future programme for families in Croydon.

To register, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.

This interactive group is held face-to-face across the borough, as well as online. It explores parenting strategies, eating well, balancing family life and much more.

www.henry.org.uk/croydon



Healthy Start scheme

See [page 6](#) for information on the Healthy Start scheme.

Physical activity

Toddlers love to move around. All forms of physical activity helps their muscles, bones and brains to develop. They need around 180 minutes of physical activity every day (it can be done across more than one session e.g. 10 or 20 minutes here and there).

Play

Playtime activities are also important and can help language development, cognitive growth (thinking, concentrating, problem-solving, decision-making), gross and fine motor skills (big and small physical movements) and social interaction.

www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/toddler/activities-for-toddlers/#activity

For information on children's centre, see [page 13](#).

Mental health support

See [page 7](#) for information on mental health support.

Parenting support

The Croydon Support and Interventions Team

The team offers parenting programmes for parents and carers of children aged 0 to 18, which can help you:

- Learn new skills and strategies to manage challenging behaviour, as well as reinforce positive behaviour
- Become more confident in your parenting
- Encourage you to look after yourself
- Gain peer support from other parents and build your own support networks
- Learn to promote your child's development

For a list of programmes, visit:

www.croydon.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes

Support for fathers and co-parents

In the early days of a baby's life, it might take some time for a father or co-parent to understand their role. There are lots of ways to help them bond with their baby and support their partner.

For more information from Tommy's charity, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



For more information on becoming a dad from the Fatherhood Institute, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



Support for separated parents

This is a group programme that supports parents or carers who are experiencing personal distress from separation or divorce, which is impacting on or complicating their parenting.

For more information, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



NCT

NCT are a charity who connect, inform and support parents through their antenatal and postnatal courses, bringing people together to share information and experiences of pregnancy, birth, and life with a new baby.

www.nct.org.uk

UNICEF

UNICEF provides a list of resources covering a range of issues around supporting close and loving relationships between parents and babies.

www.unicef.org/early-childhood-development

SEND support

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can affect a child's ability to learn. It can affect their:

- Communication and interaction – speech and language difficulties
- Cognition and learning abilities
- Social, emotional and mental health
- Sensory and/or physical abilities – hearing and sight

There are a number of ways you can get support for your child if they have SEND.

www.croydon.gov.uk/SEND

Schools and nurseries

If you think your child might have SEND, you should contact the SEN Co-ordinator or 'SENCO' in your child's school or nursery.



Local Offer

The Local Offer website provides information and advice about services for children and their families from a range of voluntary community sector organisations specialising in SEND support.

To access the site, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

If your child has more complex needs that are not being met by SEND support or universal services, a parent, carer or professional can request for an EHCP assessment.

For more information, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.



Autism Central

This is a programme funded by NHS England. It provides information about autism and the services and support that is available to parents of autistic children.

www.autismcentral.org.uk

Autism Education Trust

This site provides resources and articles to help parents with transitioning their autistic child to nursery and school.

www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/parent-guide-working-together-your-childs-school

Contact

This organisation provides information, advice and support to families who may have concerns about raising a child with additional needs. It operates a free helpline and offers a Listening Ear support service.

contact.org.uk

SEND Guide for Parents

This guide explains how the system that supports children and young people with SEND works. It covers:

- The law and guidance on which the system is based
- Places to go for help and further information
- Details about changes to the system from 1 September 2014

www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers

Easy Ready SEND Guide for Parents

www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-support-easy-read-guide-for-parents

Nasen

Nasen is the National Association for Special Educational Needs – a charity that supports and champions those working with, and for, children and young people with SEND.

nasen.org.uk

IPSEA

IPSEA helps children and young people with SEND and their families get the education they are entitled to by law.

www.ipsea.org.uk

Croydon Active Voices

This is a parent/carer forum which represents local families of children and young people living with SEND in Croydon.

www.croydonactivevoices.co.uk

Croydon SENDIASS Kids

This is a free, impartial, and confidential service offering information to young people with SEND and to their parents and carers.

www.kids.org.uk/sendiasm/services/croydon-sendiasm



USEFUL LINKS

USEFUL LINKS

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE
Childcare for babies and toddlers	
Childcare Choices	www.childcarechoices.gov.uk
Help with childcare costs	www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs
Local Offer	localoffer.croydon.gov.uk/kb5/croydon/directory/advice.page?id=PrrH6D_ygug
Family Space Croydon	www.familyspacecroydon.co.uk
Debt and welfare advice	
Citizens Advice Bureau	www.citizensadvicecroydon.org
Croydon healthy homes	www.croydon.gov.uk/healthyhomes
Jobcentre Plus - deals with claims for benefits such as Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, and Universal Credit	https://find-your-nearest-jobcentre.dwp.gov.uk
Croydon Health and Wellbeing Space	croydonhws.co.uk
BME Forum	www.cbmeforum.org

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE
Domestic abuse	
Family Justice Centre	www.croydon.gov.uk/fjs
Refuge	https://refuge.org.uk
National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV)	www.ncdv.org.uk
Women's Aid	www.womensaid.org.uk
Croydon and Bromley Women's Aid	www.bcwa.org.uk
Employment and benefit support	
Jobcentre Plus - helps people of working age find employment and training.	www.jobcentreguide.co.uk/croydon-jobcentre
Early help directory	
Find local services to support you and your family	www.croydon.gov.uk/finding-support
Youth justice	
Local offer directory - Children with additional needs	localoffer.croydon.gov.uk/kb5/croydon/directory/advice.page?id=DEnUULKSOIU
Parents or cares in conflict	
Anna Freud	www.annafreud.org/resources/family-wellbeing/advice-and-guidance-for-parents-and-carers-in-conflict-or-separating

USEFUL LINKS

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE
Safeguarding	
<p>If you are worried or have concerns that a child or young person is being neglected, harmed, or may need support, contact the MASH team by making a referral. They can offer you support and advice, as well as putting families in touch with other services.</p> <p>If you are a member of the public, you can make the referral anonymously if you are concerned that calling us could put you in a difficult position.</p>	<p>www.croydon.gov.uk/childconcern</p> <p>www.croydon.gov.uk/cscp</p> <p>www.croydon.gov.uk/earlyhelp</p> <p>www.croydon.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families</p>
Housing	
<p>Council tenants, find a home, land and premises, landlords, housing support, private tenants, council garages, homeowners and leaseholders. Also, information on the housing situation in Croydon including options and support available to you.</p>	<p>www.croydon.gov.uk/housing</p>

ORGANISATION	WEBSITE
Public health services	
Stop smoking	www.croydon.gov.uk/smokefree www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/stop-smoking
Live Well Croydon	www.croydon.gov.uk/livewell
Drug and alcohol services	www.croydon.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/drugs-and-alcohol
Sexual and reproductive health services (including contraception)	www.croydonsexualhealth.nhs.uk
Mental health support	
Mental health support	www.croydon.gov.uk/mentalhealthsupport
Family Lives	www.familylives.org.uk
MIND Croydon	www.mindincroydon.org.uk
Talk off the Record	www.talkofftherecord.org/croydon
Croydon Drop-in	croydondropin.org.uk



www.croydon.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/family-hubs/start-life-offer

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