

B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK
NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2017



Welcome to our
B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK
Newsletter.

Greetings Babywatching community!
We hope that despite many recent tragic and challenging events in the UK and abroad, you, your colleagues and families are well and thriving. I'm sure many will have been touched directly or indirectly by events in Manchester, London Bridge and the Grenfell Tower block fire, and so many places overseas as well; if so, our love and thoughts go to you.

As you know, the basic premise of **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** is to promote the development of empathy, and to reduce anxiety and aggression. Our founder, **Dr Karl Heinz-Brisch**, created the model we practise grounded in the key principles

of attachment theory: that those who have and can draw on secure relationships of trust, attunement, warmth and empathy are likely to feel confident, calm, secure and loving, and curious and open to engagement in the world around them. In turn, having *received* empathy, they are more likely to be able to *offer* empathy and sensitive care to those around them. We see this in our **Babywatching** group leaders and mentors, in the parents giving sensitive care to their babies whom they bring to **Babywatching** groups, and see - and delight in - the growth of empathy in the children we work with, drawing on the care they are receiving from group leaders, teachers, from the vicarious experience of seeing the parent care for their baby, and from each other.

So we thank you sincerely for your effort and contribution in helping empathy spread through the work you do with groups, in schools and elsewhere. May it long continue to flow outwards to our wider communities.

Andrea Perry, Co-founder

*In this edition of the Newsletter you'll find **important news** about **our new CEO**, **our new Advisory Board**, and about our most **recent training**. There's a **letter** from **Griselda Kellie-Smith** who is handing control of most of the reins to our new CEO, **Michele Crooks**, and **another** from Michele, fresh from her new Babywatching UK desk. There's a complete **list of mentors**; information about recent additions to the **resources on the website**; some **stories and comments** from groups that have been happening all across the country. Please continue to spread the word about **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** as much as possible - if you are inspired, then you are one of our best ambassadors. And please remember that **Kulsum Ismail** is here 3 days a week in our Babywatching office to answer queries and help you develop your practice.*

B.A.S.E.®BABYWATCHING UK
50 Peterborough Road London SW6 3EB
0207 731 5946
www.base-babywatching-uk.org
info@base-babywatching-uk.org

ANNOUNCING – OUR NEW CEO!!

Our most important news to share with you all is that **Michele Crooks**, a hugely experienced **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK** group leader, mentor and trainer, in addition to her other professional roles of therapist, teacher (and singer-songwriter), has been appointed as our first ever CEO. Michele's appointment feels like a huge step for **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK**, which, as you may know, was founded in a completely voluntary capacity 5 years ago by Griselda Kellie-Smith and Andrea Perry, and has basically been run on that basis with the addition of many wonderful trainees who've gone on to lead groups, train and practice as mentors, and work tirelessly in advisory roles ever since. We should also mention the contribution of David Kellie-Smith, Griselda's husband, who plays a fabulous and crucial 'behind the scenes' role, and who is co-Trustee of our charity (**Babywatching UK**) with Griselda and Andrea. So Michele's appointment represents a step of confidence, in terms of building on the

great work that has gone before - (the organisation is growing up! No longer a baby or toddler!) - and a real hope for and commitment to the future of **B.A.S.E.® Babywatching** in the UK. Michele brings a huge amount of experience, wisdom, care and creativity to this role, and we all wish her the very best as she takes up her new role to help and support the organisation to strengthen and grow. She'll be in touch soon.

So you may wonder what Griselda will be doing now! Probably most people have had contact with her through our office, through training and as a wise and wonderful mentor. Griselda has been phenomenal; without her, there would be no **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK**, and really we can never thank her and her husband David, enough.

So, whilst we are delighted that she wants to continue to be involved in many ways including mentoring and fundraising, we also celebrate the fact that going forward, she is choosing to prioritise being

able to enjoy much more unbelievably well-earned time together with David .

ANNOUNCING – OUR NEW ADVISORY BOARD!

At the same time as appointing our first CEO, we have created an Advisory Board made up of the two founders (Griselda and Andrea) and four senior **B.A.S.E.® Babywatching** people - **Helen Craster**, who (along with Griselda, Andrea and Michele) is also a **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** trainer: Sharon Rubens, Christabel McEwen and Toni Medcalf, all of whom are highly experienced Group Leaders and Mentors. The function of the Advisory Board will be to support Michele and Kulsum as they navigate a way forward for **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK**, setting aims and objectives thinking through strategy together. The Board (along with the Trustees) will also be responsible for ethical standards within **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK**, since we all appreciate how essential it is to maintain the professional ethos of our work and the

reputation of the organisation. Michele and Kulsum will also attend meetings three times a year.

From GRISELDA KELLIE-SMITH, Co-founder of Babywatching UK

In 2011, during an Attachment conference presented by Dr Brisch, I was excited to encounter his deceptively simple programme that encouraged children to engage with their emotional curiosity as they observed the developing relationship between a parent and baby. **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching!** Videos showed that the programme was designed to help children whose lack of understanding of others' motives caused them to behave aggressively. It also helped those whose fear of others caused them to withdraw. Bringing a parent and baby to a group of children for them to observe, once a week, for a school year, facilitated by their class teacher (and Group Leader), made so much sense to Andrea and to me; teaching children how to engage with empathy seemed such a worthwhile thing to try to do. So, an inspiring, thought-provoking day of encouragement and Group Leader training in Germany with Dr Brisch, and his encouragement, was the germ that triggered our first UK pilot group and then our first UK Group Leader training. By 2014 we had become **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK** and also a charity.

Many of you, friends and colleagues have encouraged, advised and offered time and expertise with enormous generosity, believing passionately in what **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK** offers children, teachers and the wider community. But it takes a great deal of empathic understanding, strength and diplomatic determination to push open doors when introducing BASE to those with educational influence, who make decisions about what our children will focus on. They may welcome BASE, but because of lack of funds and constant demands and changes in curriculum it can be difficult for Headteachers to see how to fit **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK** into their whole school responsibilities. Encouraging observation of a group in progress often makes a positive impact, as does having skilled Group Leaders guided by experienced, skilful Mentors. Both are central to **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK's** health and future.

All this has been managed on a 'shoe-string', by generous people fitting Babywatching into any space they can find in their busy work schedules. To grow we need to move up a gear, with a paid CEO, paid Administrator (part-time until we can afford more) and funds coming from charities that understand us and believe in our vision. Andrea, I and the Advisory Board are all delighted that Michele has accepted the two-day post of CEO, and I am delighted to hand over to her. Her creativity, intelligence and energy will be at full

stretch. There is a lot of work to do. Michele will have support from the Board, but the day-to-day decisions will hers, ably supported by Kulsum who has taken **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK** to her heart and is an invaluable member of the team.

I have hugely enjoyed the exciting, exhausting privilege of being able to give **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** a helping hand into the UK. I am very grateful to Andrea for introducing me to Dr Brisch and then working together to make our vision for BASE in the UK and the Isle of Man come alive. Six years later, it is time to hand over to the next generation with hope and a strong belief that **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK** is in very good hands.

GKS, July 2017

From MICHELE CROOKS, our new CEO

I am so thrilled and excited to start this journey with **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK**, but have to be honest and say that Griselda is simply irreplaceable! Thankfully, her energy, enthusiasm and inspiration will continue to be part of this amazing project, if not in the daily grind.

I continue to be inspired by the way Babywatching transforms children (and us, as we lead the groups!) and I continue to be inspired by all of you as you carry a passionate torch for this work. I plan to inject huge energy to help everyone feel

supported and part of the Babywatching family. I hope that with your invaluable support and commitment **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK** will continue to grow and reach yet more children.

And we will learn together. Communication is central to all this, and I want to make a commitment to really listen to our Group Leaders, Mentors, teachers, Head teachers, parents, parents who bring their babies to our groups, our donors - and of course, very importantly, the children with whom we work. I'm looking forward to working closely with Kulsum Ismail, the Advisory Board and the Trustees. We start a new chapter here, but can only stand tall on the words, energy and actions that have brought us to this point. Let's get started! MC, July 2017

FUND-RAISING

One of Michele's roles will be fund-raising – and we'll all need to get behind that, as funds so far have come from two incredibly kind, one-off donations. As you know, we aim to always make **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** training as inexpensive as possible, so that every school can find a way to include it in their budget. We hold to a not-for-profit approach. However – we do need to have money going forward if we are to thrive!

So – you can help by:

- i) Letting Michele or Kulsum know if you spot a potential opportunity for us to bid for money from a particular donor – for example if you come across a Trust or Foundation whose application criteria we might fit
- ii) Letting us know if you are able to do any fundraising yourself - we can provide some materials to support you
- iii) Talking about the value of **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** to everyone and especially if you know or meet - or are yourself! - a potential donor.

Thank you so much.

GROUPS around the UK

At the time of writing there are 35 B.A.S.E.®Babywatching groups running in the UK and Isle of Man. We look forward to more starting up, following a very positive Group Leader training in June in London. If you trained this year or any previous year, and need support to get going, do contact the office – we can provide you with the list of Mentors and much besides.

UPCOMING TRAINING

There will both Group Leader and Mentor trainings on the Isle of Man in September, and both Group Leader and Mentor trainings in London in 2018.

Please contact the office for more details.



TELLING THE STORY

We hear wonderful stories of progress and the learning happening in schools where there are **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** groups, the progress and the learning. Please keep sending us your accounts from your experience, and that of the children in the groups, other staff members, parents of children in the groups or the parent who brings his or her baby to your group. It's all interesting and useful and helps us all to better understand the difference that **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** is making.

From BASE Group Leader and Mentor PAUL CUTLER (UKCP registered Child Psychotherapist) – from the first group at the Oaktree Special Educational School Group:

The Class teacher has "loved" the sessions, as has Mum. The Class teacher wrote:

"I met with our class Speech and Language Therapist today to add more folders to the children's 'talkers'. This should enable us to both prepare additional symbols in advance and quickly add words / symbols as they may arise in the session. I will make a paper communication board for the others which can be added to each week as necessary. The children are familiar with these as I use them to support communication in our lessons so may help them feel more confident communicating as well as help them 'find' the vocabulary they cannot think of alone. This may enable them to really engage with the sessions and share with confidence.

We have printed out some photos for this week's session and I will try to display these with the communication board to encourage further incidental reflections

during the school week.

It has been a really interesting experience so far. and I was amazed to see the change in (child's name) over the course of just two sessions. Also fascinating to see another somewhat passive child be so captivated by what he saw, and want to approach and join in!"

Who?	What	excited	happy	sad	poorly		
Gem	Elliott	toys	ball	surprise	Ok	good	love
Mum	Baby	book	bricks	like	surprise	hungry	thirsty
kissing	laughing	tickling	stroking	playing	clapping	joking	jumping
singing	sitting	crawling	sleeping	rolling	smiling	drinking	eating
talking	building	peek-a-boo	crying	reading	laying	walking	holding

From TONI MEDCALF, Child Psychotherapist, Schools Counselling Partnership, B.A.S.E. Group Leader, Mentor & Advisory Board member:

A couple of years ago I ran a **B.A.S.E.® Babywatching** group in one of my Ealing schools within which there was a 6 year old boy who wouldn't speak in school. This was impacting on his friendship, his

learning and his overall self-esteem.

When I set up the group I hadn't been made aware of this fact, I had just been told that he was shy and lacking in self-confidence. So in my first session when he asked a question, I answered as I would any child's question.

It was only after the session when the mother, who also happened to be a teacher in the school, excitedly said, *"I can't believe what just happened in there"*. I had no idea what she was talking about until she explained that this little boy hadn't spoken for the whole three years that he had been in the school. As the weeks progressed he grew in confidence and soon started to talk to friends initially and then slowly his class teacher.

Now I know this is old news and this story has appeared before but ... read on!

Over the last couple of weeks I have been talking to all of the children in this particular school with a view to producing some Sociograms for the whole school. Sociograms are a way of measuring the peer relationships within a school and identifying the children who are 'rejected', 'neglected', 'controversial' or 'popular'. I ask the children to name the three children they most like in their class and

the three they least like. This information is then put into a matrix and scored.

Imagine my delight when scoring the sociograms to discover that this little boy, now 8 years old, came out as the most popular boy in his class. Babywatching truly is amazing.

**From HESTER SMITH in Brighton,
St Paul's Class: Reception (4-5yrs)**

Fridays, 1-2pm (2 x 20 minute groups of approximately 15 children each)

Start date: 4/11/16 (Baby R*** aged 5 weeks) Planned end date: 21/7/17

Teacher' Comments – by email

Here are my thoughts about **B.A.S.E.®
Babywatching**

*"I think the Baby Watching has been a great success. The children have really enjoyed the sessions and look forward to Fridays when they know Emma and R*** will be coming in. I think the key to the success is that:*

** it has been well organised, the children quickly adapted to the structure of the session*

**all the children have been encouraged to be involved*

**the children's contributions are valued*

as well as making comments about what they see the children are encouraged to think more deeply about why R* or Emma might be doing*

*something and about how Emma and R*** and they themselves are feeling*

**the adults in the sessions were very keen for this venture to succeed and have developed good relationships and good relationships with the children*

Emma has been a great facilitator with what she has been doing during the sessions with Baby R* so that the children had lots to observe*

**splitting the class into two groups has meant that it was easier for all the children to have a turn if they wanted and for them to see what was going on*

**it has been very educational and allowed the children to develop their knowledge and understanding of the development of a young baby and the relationship between mother and baby*

first hand, also to explore a range of emotions that baby, mother and they are feeling

**the sessions were fun!*

Teacher's verbal comments

It's been great fun

It's been well organised and well structured

*Emma [the mother] has facilitated the play with R*** [baby] really well and that's been helpful and Emma and Hester's [Group Leader] warmth with the children has really helped.*

The children feel excited - they associate Fridays with Babywatching. They're very engaged. It gives them the opportunity to have some quiet, focused time. I love it when they make links with what they're observing and previous experience - the why and how people feel and what they're trying to communicate.

They're taking on board the difference between questions and statements [We encourage them to save questions for the

end and I notice they're becoming more able to do that. H.S.]

They're all 'noticing' now. [I've noticed that the children who held back initially are now offering their comments, some only recently for the first time, others more regularly, and I can see their confidence growing each week. I've especially noticed with the number of children in the class who have English as a second language, how their articulacy and vocabulary and general language skills have grown over the weeks of coming to Babywatching H.S.]

Children's comments

[We asked them to say what they liked about Babywatching and what they would tell an alien who had just landed about Babywatching]

Q: How do you feel about doing Babywatching? / What do you like about Babywatching?

*I would like to play with his toys
I like it because he's happy
I like it when he jumps up and down
Because he always smiles
I like it when he plays with his toys [this from several of the children]
Happy!
Because he's funny sometimes
Feels good because I like to watch him play
I enjoy watching him
He can see us
Because he plays with his toys and we can learn
On Fridays I feel happy and good
I like it because it's quiet. It helps my headache.
I learn more
I learn to look after babies so when I'm grown-up I can look after my baby.
We like it when Mummy Emma makes R*** jump because he likes it*

Q: What do we do at Babywatching? What would you tell an alien about Babywatching?

*It's when you watch a baby to see what he is doing
We do questions at the end
We sit down and watch and put our hands up. We say what we can see.
We be quiet and put our hands up
We do like it
Baby R*** drinks milk
We put our hands up to ask a question
Baby R*** likes it because he jumps up and down every time...because he makes funny faces
We sit and we put our hands if we want to ask a question
We can ask about Baby R***
We listen to the noises Baby R*** makes
Baby R*** plays with his toys.
If he comes when he's sleeping you need to be quiet
Sometimes Mummy Emma makes him jump when he's crying because Mummy wants to make him happy.*

ROS KANE, Group Leader

The problem I had was that my hearing isn't very good. So I had to ask the teacher or TA to repeat what the kids said sometimes. I discussed this with (my mentor). The issue was solved by another leader taking over my group. We realised that people who train as group leaders need to know that hearing can be a problem. Could it be validating for the kids to hear what they said repeated by an adult to the class (a bit like playback theatre)?

Andrea writes: *We welcome Ros raising this issue. We recognise that there might be some validation for children from time to time, if, as Ros suggests, something they have said needs to be repeated. However, we do feel that it's essential for children to know that for the most part, they can trust that they will be heard when they comment. Some children may speak very softly, perhaps daring to contribute for the first time. Sometimes children speak all at once. We recognise both*

situations may be challenging for people whose hearing is impaired. Certainly an issue to raise with your Mentor, to find a way forward!

PAUL CUTLER, a note from the first group at Oaktree. (see p.5)

The liveliest, but just 7 children. One boy verbal but using his communication board responded when asked what he was seeing with "Laugh...Love"

Thanks to all our contributors for a really vivid insight into how the work is having such interesting and fruitful effects, from confidence in speaking, to writing skills, to the development of empathy at home and at school. We hope you feel as heartened reading these as we do!

FINALLY – Thanks everyone for your energy and commitment. We look forward to sharing B.A.S.E.@Babywatching UK's continuing development with you.

The 16th INTERNATIONAL ATTACHMENT CONFERENCE

hosted by

B.A.S.E.@Babywatching founder

Dr Karl-Heinz Brisch

will take place in

Ulm, Germany, 29/09 - 01/10 2017



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