

B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK **NEWSLETTER October 2018**



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

From **MICHELE CROOKS**, our CEO, who supports and develops **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** across the UK

Welcome to our newsletter! This academic year has started with the highest number of new and returning groups **of any previous September term**, so we are feeling particularly excited!!!!

I will be starting a group at one of my schools, this will be their 2nd year of having **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** sessions. My volunteer mum's baby will be only a month old! I'm also starting 3 groups in another school with an equally small baby

- this time in their reception classes. This is the youngest group I've worked with, so I have a mixture of excitement and trepidation.

We have some experienced mentors for this age group - I shall be picking their brains!

Finding volunteers seems a really mixed experience. In some areas, it appears to be a real challenge and in other areas, there is an abundance. I'm sure there is no hard and fast rule about tips to success. I'm so shameless I approached a pregnant lady at my daughter's wedding this year! Thankfully that conversation led to a happy ending and I'm looking forward to starting with her and her baby very soon.

So, other than being utterly shameless, here are some other useful tips gathered from Group Leaders over the last few years on the all-important task of Finding a Parent and Baby for your group:

1. Find out about local NCT groups (*or other parent groups*), talk to the leader and ask permission to take a

leaflet (*lovely posters and leaflets available from Kulsum at BW UK Head Office*) or even better, visit, to chat to mums about the project.

2. Visit the local nursery nearest to your school and adopt the same approach as point 1.
3. Ask if anyone in the nursery knows of a pregnant friend who might be interested.
4. Ask teachers and scan the playground for potential parents!
5. Ask friends.
6. Ask an existing Babywatching parent who might have friends with similarly aged babies
7. Ask the school to display a poster (*again, available from Kulsum*) appealing for volunteers, or a letter for the children's home bag.

New material on the BW UK website may help. We've created a volunteering tab so potential volunteers can find out what would be involved if they become a **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** parent. We have put up a video from two volunteer mums talking about their experiences. We're also collecting parent's comments about what they - and importantly their babies - might gain from participating.

AND it's always worth remembering that 'parents' means, mums/dads and even grandparents. In fact, anyone who is showing they are building a loving, attuned, sensitive relationship to their baby is a perfect volunteer.

YOUR STORIES!

Your stories/experiences or even anecdotal one liners are so wonderful to hear about - please send them to Kulsum. One of my favourites recently was from a Year 3 child:

'We find out how baby grows in her heart'.

This project continues to make such a difference to so many children. Thank you for everything you do to help that happen.

Michele



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From **Griselda Kellie-Smith**, Co-Founder of **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK**

Fundraising

B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK started in 2012 with a gift from an enthusiastic supporter. In 2014, a second larger gift was made by another supportive donor who could see the important impact **Babywatching** was making in several schools, but also appreciated the struggle to survive financially, because of the need to keep the very modest office going. The donor's hope was that we would find substantial funders to build on the start these two initial gifts gave us.

We became a charity to use these funds as effectively as possible and so that we could accept funding from foundations and charities as well as personal donors.

We are very grateful to Kevin Street for

his valued support through a donation to **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK** with each copy sold of his book 'School as a Secure Base' (2014 - recommended reading! Includes an excellent description of **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** as one of several strategies that can help make a school a more empathic and supportive place). We have also twice received funds from a choir's fundraising generosity in Hinkley, Leicestershire.

Although very aware of our need for funds, with our part-time team of three at **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching UK** office, during our early years we have needed to focus on training, supporting Group Leaders in their schools, Mentoring, gathering data that measures the effectiveness of **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching**, writing articles and networking. We have been growing and we have certainly been learning.

However, the consequence is that our funds are running extremely low and we must now prioritise our focus on fundraising.

None of us is a fundraising expert, so

any thoughts or ideas you may have will be extremely welcome - *as are donations!* Michele Crooks, our CEO, has done a wonderful job applying to the Big Lottery and other organisations but so far, we haven't fitted their profiles. We are too small. **This is a real Catch 22.** Disappointing as this is, we are certainly not giving up and are now focussing on smaller charities who may understand our profile better. Our Advisory Board are a great support and we will put together an active plan with them at our next meeting in November. We are also adding a **Go Fund Me** page to the website.

Please watch out for the launch on November 1st and please spread the word by social media or whatever methods of communication you prefer - every little really will undoubtedly help (though naturally we'd prefer A LOT!!)

All ideas, however modest, are welcome (cake sales, sponsored walks, bike rides, swims) and we thank you all for your enthusiasm and commitment to **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** which has been

helping so many children and school communities.

Finally, please let us know if you think of anyone who may be a useful contact. It's often, as we know, not *what* you know but *who* you know! Thanks everyone.



From **Carolynn Adams**, Group Leader in **Yorkshire**

I have loved running a group this year. Apart from **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** I have little other contact with this class. However, Babywatching has meant that I have made lasting bonds with a number of children in the class who now feel able to approach me whenever they feel the need. And everyone has grown very fond of baby A.

* * *

*Excerpts from **Geraldine Leydon's** Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, Churchill Fellowship Summer 2016 research on **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching: Best Practice in Early Years Education: Securing the best life chances for young children.***

Case Study: Tauranga Girls Secondary School, New Zealand

*I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to meet a **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** leader at Tauranga School in New Zealand. I watched a group in a class of 17 and 18-year-olds. The girls were in their final year of school.*

I found it interesting how the course is modified for older children but still focuses on attachment between the (parent) and baby. The girls go into (different) settings as part of their course and they have a much better understanding of attachment, so crucial to the child's emotional health and development.

*During the **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** session the toys/blankets etc. that children were attached to were discussed and how each child needs a sense of safety. The notion of meeting the baby's needs came up a number of times, as well as how needs are known and met. How does mum know what the baby is thinking/needs? How does he/she feel etc.? Secure attachment was also a*

common point of focus. One of the girls said

"If he doesn't feel safe then he doesn't explore."

Finance for the programme is at a remarkably low cost and very affordable for schools. It is far less than other programmes, making it sustainable which is very important when embarking on a new project. I was excited about this class as **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** here has the dual role of developing empathy whilst also developing knowledge of child development.

"It's awesome being in the childhood class, to know what is happening in that moment...You can see where the love is directed to." one of the students said

For me, the big lesson here was the importance of attachment and empathy. My last conversation with my host was about how these are essential to underpin all learning and without them, such things as self-regulation/self-control won't come into being.

Later I went to Munich where I met Dr Brisch who is the founder of the programme. What was clear from the visit was the commitment to children and their emotional wellbeing. It has also fuelled my interest in education as a multidisciplinary profession that would do well to draw upon neuroscience and psychology.

I visited a number of settings in Frankfurt and Osnabruck. Consistently I was told that this programme is of benefit to all children. I have watched groups of ten - twenty five children, mixed aged groups from three to six and groups with children aged seven. A number of groups were inclusive of children with many different needs. A kindergarten manager told me about another professional who used the outdoor area with younger children saying that she noticed the older children who traditionally dominated the space were far more sensitive and considerate to the younger children post-**B.A.S.E.®Babywatching**.

I have also heard many instances of children being able to say how they feel e.g. not just a simple 'fine' but being specific. One story I cherish was a boy who helped to pick up a boy who had fallen over whom he was not particularly friendly with. He said, 'I know how you feel.' Another success that was relayed to me was a child who had presented happily, but post-**B.A.S.E.®Babywatching** was able to express himself more effectively which led to therapy. I have also been told of an account of an elective mute who spoke during a session. One practitioner said to me that she witnessed 'soft faces' when referring to some strong boys after experiencing Babywatching. She felt this carried over into the everyday life of the classroom.

Whilst reflecting on my visit to Osnabruck and Munster, it became clear to me that the **passion and commitment of (the individuals who coordinates the work) are key to its success in that part of the country.**

What I learnt is hugely beneficial about the programme is its simplicity. All the mums whose sessions I watched absolutely loved the programme and coming into school/nursery. I asked one mum how she felt as her baby was at the age to finish the programme and she said she felt so sad (and looked it) as she loved going into the setting. What I have liked about the groups that I have seen is how easy it is to put into place once it has been established. I have seen the children putting out the chairs and once the children are settled and ready a child has helped to bring the mother and baby to the group. It is highly sustainable, compared to other programmes. As a past teacher, I would initially find yet another thing to do too much at times, but this needs no planning (there is initial training), a mat and a reliable mum/dad with their baby. I know it would be hugely beneficial in England where a multitude of factors affects precious time.

Conclusion **B.A.S.E.®Babywatching is clearly evidence-based and has been implemented successfully on a large scale. The importance of confident leaders is key and it can be beneficial across age phases.**

<https://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/r>

[eport-
documents/Leydon%20G%20Report%202016
%20Final.pdf](https://www.leydon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Leydon%20G%20Report%202016%20Final.pdf)

**Glowing review of one mum's experience
of B.A.S.E. @Babywatching!!**

Sent by **PAUL CUTLER**, Grafton and
Oaktree **B.A.S.E. @Babywatching** Group
Leader and Mentor, and UKCP registered
Child Psychotherapist

My eldest son had **B.A.S.E.@Babywatching** classes when he was in year 1 in 2015/16 and absolutely loved them. A mother and her little baby girl would visit his class each week, and the children would "watch" the two of them. My son would look forward to these visits, talk about them more than anything else at school, and his enthusiasm was particularly delightful for us as his parents because we were hoping to have another baby ourselves.

The classes were designed to build empathy, and for my six-year-old boy with a penchant for maths and Lego they really did seem to make a huge difference. He wondered about this little girl and her mother, reported all the stages of development that he

witnessed, and took in all the minutiae of babyhood wide-eyed with wonder.

So, when I did eventually find myself pregnant with our third baby I called the school and asked if they'd like a fresh mother/baby subject for another class. I'd assumed it was a routine (and brilliant) thing that the school rolled out, but it turned out that my baby and I were the second baby watching class they had ever held.

H (known as "Baby H" by the fabulous Reception class we came to know so well) was born in February 2017 and we started the classes when he was 6 weeks old. We went in for 30 minutes once a week. The class sat round on the carpet and watched as I held H, fed him, played and sang with him. A couple of times he slept through the whole session, sometimes he screamed his head off (because babies do!) and once - possibly the highlight for the class - he did a poo and I had to change his nappy.

What made the sessions so valuable was that they were led by the school psychologist, Paul Cutler. I didn't say a word (apart from

addressing Baby H). Paul encouraged all the children to consider carefully what the baby and I were doing and what our actions might mean about how we were feeling. A typical interaction would follow like this:

Paul: *What is the baby doing now?*

Child 1: *He is smiling and holding his mummy's hand.*

Paul: *That's right, well done. Why do you think he is holding her hand?*

Child 1: *He likes to hold it.*

Paul: *Yes, and why do you think that is?*

Child 1: *He likes to be sure she is still there.*

Paul: *I think you're right, yes. Why do you think he likes to know she is there?*

Child 2: *Because it makes him **feel** happy.*

Child 3: *His mummy **makes** him feel good.*

Paul: *If you were the baby on your mummy's lap and holding her hand, how would you feel?*

Child 1: *I would feel happy.*

Paul: *How would you show that?*

Child 1: *I would smile - like Baby H is doing now.*

Child 2: *He is happy because he knows his mummy is there and he is safe.*

Pause - (in which I marvel at it all)

Child 4: *HE DID A BURP!!*

Paul was incredibly talented at including all the children in the class and drawing out their understanding of these very normal day-to-day emotions. Labelling them, working through from *“holding a hand and smiling”* to concepts of *“happiness and security”*.

I found the sessions incredibly valuable to me as a mother. H is my third child and I was very busy and tired on my third maternity leave. This time each week gave me the chance to stop and reflect on my baby, his development and our relationship. The analysis of a reception class constantly surprised and delighted me, and I noticed how quickly they developed from the basic observation - *“he has opened his eyes”* comments to the *“he is looking at all the children because we are really interesting and*

loud” analysis. Watching 30 children grow their empathy and understanding of emotion is a massive privilege.

They also taught me (things): notably when he started teething, they didn't assume he was in pain, but that he must be very excited about getting big teeth (not an assumption many adults make), which was eye-opening and lovely.

I would recommend taking part in Babywatching to any parent, though I would suggest that it would be easier for a second or third time parent rather than with a first baby. My husband took H for a couple of sessions too, because it felt very important to us that the class should see a father interacting with his baby and how subtly different his ways of showing love and security are.

We finished the sessions when H was around 7 months old and starting to crawl really well because he was way too active a subject! But I cannot go to the library or the park without bumping into one of those children and they cry out *“It's Baby H!”* and race over to see him. As the third child in a

big family, it's really lovely that **Babywatching** has already carved out a role for him in our community and school - he certainly doesn't sit in his older siblings' shadows! So we have all benefitted from it: our baby, his parents and the whole class of children.

13 NEW GROUPS THIS TERM !!!

We've started the term with a bang! We have **13 BRAND NEW B.A.S.E. @Babywatching groups** expecting to start this term alone! A huge welcome to all our new Group Leaders: congratulations on running your first group, and in some cases, more than one group! We're delighted you have joined our community: good luck to all.

We also welcome back everyone who is running a group for the second or third time - we really appreciate your contribution, learning, increasing wisdom and experience. We look forward to hearing more as the term goes on. You make a significant impact on the children's wellbeing (and on the whole school community) if your school becomes a **B.A.S.E. @Babywatching** school.

Please remember to share your stories, learning and experience with us. You can email kulsum@base-babywatching-uk.org

Also, a big THANK YOU for sending through your Group session forms - please keep sending one each time you start a new group.

As with the previous newsletter we wanted to remind you that our wonderful administrator Kulsum Ismail is available to support with SDQ scoring. Please do contact her if you would like support with any of the measuring tools used for your group – or indeed anything else.

VOLUNTEERS

We are often looking for volunteer parents to be part of **B.A.S.E. @Babywatching** groups with their babies, or to be part of training. So, if you know anyone who might be interested, please let Kulsum at Head Office know or share our contact details with the parent - they can be found on our website. Thank you.



TRAINING

We are pleased to let you know that our Annual Group Leader Training will be taking place in London on **Thursday 13th June 2019**. The early bird fee applies until 31st March 2019! For bookings and enquiries, please contact kulsum@base-babywatching-uk.org

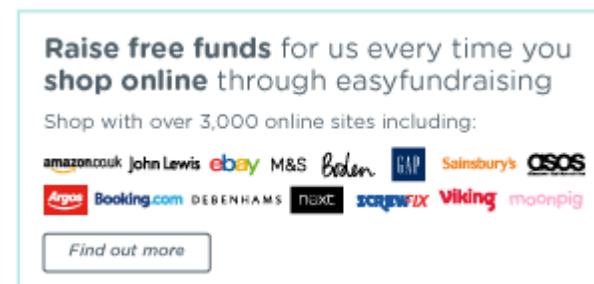
The Annual Mentor training is on Friday **14th June 2019**. Please speak to your Mentor if you are interested in training. There will also be a regional training in the **Isle of Man in November**.

We would be delighted to discuss local and regional Group Leader trainings, please contact us at Head Office to arrange a call to discuss.

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easyfundraising

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We've registered with **easyfundraising** and we need your help!

easyfundraising is a great website where you can help **B.A.S.E. @Babywatching** raise funds simply by doing your everyday online shopping with over 3,300 big name retailers like Amazon, Argos, John Lewis, ASOS, Booking.com, eBay, Boden, and M&S. Every time you shop, we receive a small donation to say 'Thank you' and it's completely free too! We want (and need) to raise as much as possible so please sign up and help us at <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/basebwuk/> Thank you, from the BWUK team.

From **Andrea Perry** co-founder of **BabywatchingUK**, **B.A.S.E. @Babywatching** trainer, BWUKTrustee and Newsletter Editor

*Just a small note about some rather lateral benefits of **B.A.S.E. @Babywatching** that I've noticed. I do a lot of work with asylum seekers and refugees with the assistance of interpreters, and have trained volunteers and staff to do this work as well. I've also trained many school counsellors whose first language*

is not English, observing their interactions with their students, again through an interpreter.

I genuinely feel that I have become much, much better at both these things because of Babywatching - which attunes us so much to tiny, subtle interactions between people - usually a baby and parent - as they make relationship and have impact on each other. I can see that it's really helped me at a profound level to be far better aware not only of the nuanced shifts in body language, but also in the psychological containment the staff/volunteer/counsellor is or isn't providing, in terms of the impact on how the client responds. It's heightened my awareness of the power of acceptance, acknowledgement, empathy and validation of the feelings, thoughts, needs and motivation of the client or student, seeing how they free energy physically, emotionally and cognitively, and perhaps even spiritually.

*And somehow I think participating in **B.A.S.E. @Babywatching** may 'work' differently to classical baby observation. I wonder what other people think about this, or any other effects you've noticed for yourself? It would be great to hear your experience. For myself I am so grateful to be part of the whole*

Babywatching movement, and I fully believe there are yet more benefits to be discovered, for all kinds of children and adults in all kinds of situations. Empathy can travel everywhere!

Babywatching UK



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