

Babies under one

Under its strategy to 2016 the NSPCC will focus on providing distinct activities where it can maximise impact.

As part of the development of these services seven areas of child abuse will be prioritised: Neglect; physical abuse in high risk families; sex abuse; children under one; children with disabilities; children from black and minority ethnic communities and children in the care system.



Everything we learn from working in these areas will be used to create a cycle of improvement and will help us work with other organisations and individuals to help end cruelty to children.

Why are we focussing on babies under one?

Babies under one are at more risk of being killed than any other age group of children. They are nine times more likely to be involved in death or serious injury and almost three times more likely to be subject to a child protection plan. We need to understand more about this and how we can give better protection to these children.

Key facts and figures:

- Official homicide figures show that, on average, 30 babies under one are killed every year.
- Statistics almost certainly under-estimate the extent of abuse and neglect of babies as most child abuse goes unreported.
- Research has found that women are more likely to abandon or kill babies just after they are born. Beyond that early period, it is men that are more likely to inflict severe injuries on babies.
- Some parents may inadvertently harm their baby because they do not understand their developmental needs.
- Babies can be harmed because the mother suffers severe postnatal depression or the parents find looking after a baby stressful and frustrating.
- A common cause of injury to babies is fractured bones caused by dropping or hitting a baby – particularly on the head.
- A baby's neck is very fragile so if a baby is shaken it can cause brain damage and even death.
- Research has found that babies can cry at a sound level of just below the noise of a pneumatic drill. The most common reason given for shaking a baby: "It wouldn't stop crying" (NSPCC 2000).