

The

Young parent survival guide

Great information for young mums and dads
www.opfs.org.uk

10 top tips for brand new dads and partners

Bonding with your baby



Money for you and your baby



Can I study after baby?

Pregnancy and Parenthood



We are happy to consider requests for other languages or formats. Please contact 0131 536 5500 or email nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net



One Parent Families Scotland
informing · supporting · inspiring

One Parent Families Scotland has been providing services and support to lone parent families for over 60 years.

OPFS offers a unique, specialist, free, confidential telephone and email information service staffed by experienced Lone Parent Rights Workers. The helpline is at the heart of the organisation and is how we connect with, inform and inspire lone parent families.

You can contact us by:
Telephone: **0808 801 0323** (free to landlines and most mobiles)
Fax: **0131 557 7899**
Email: info@opfs.org.uk
Website: www.opfs.org.uk

One Parent Families Scotland
13 Gayfield Square
Edinburgh EH1 3NX

This resource is intended to provide support and guidance to all young people who may become pregnant. If you are a transgender young person and require any further support, please visit www.lgbtyouth.org.uk



This publication has been produced in partnership between NHS Health Scotland and One Parent Families Scotland.

We would like to thank Treoir in Dublin for allowing us to adapt their *Young Parent Survival Guide* for young Scottish parents and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency who funded the original project. Thanks to First Steps Programme and the Disabled Parents Network for their contribution towards developing this publication.

Welcome!

Nobody is born with the skills and know-how to be a parent. But everyone has the potential to be a good parent. However, all parents need support, information and advice, including young parents.

Whether you're a parent now or you're soon to be one, whether you're on your own, in a family, struggling to make ends meet or financially secure, this magazine is for you.

It has key information and good advice from when you find out you're pregnant (and wish to continue with your pregnancy) through to parenthood.

It covers telling your family and friends that you're pregnant, as well as going to the midwife and hospital. It also gives you advice on money and benefits and legal information.

It explains the key things you need to know about, such as:

- looking after yourself and your baby
- arranging a place to live
- the importance of dads and partners in the life of babies
- safer sex for the future
- a host of other useful tips and contacts.

The *Young Parent Survival Guide* will be useful for this phase of your life so hold on to it. You can read it from cover to cover or just dip in and out of sections you're interested in.

We hope you enjoy it!

Susan Rew

Susan Rew
Information and Training Manager
One Parent Families Scotland

Let me know what you think about this magazine at info@opfs.org.uk

CONTENTS

You're pregnant	2	Feeding your baby	14	Relationships	25
Linda's pregnancy	4	Introducing play@home and Bookbug	15	Safer sex	26
Laura's story	5	Coming home with your baby	16	Difficult bits	27
Keeping healthy during your pregnancy	6	Baby blues	17	A roof over your head	26
Ready Steady Baby! goes mobile	7	Life with baby	18	Legal information	30
Top tips for dads and partners on keeping healthy	8	10 top tips for brand new dads and partners	20	Can I study after baby?	32
Who's who and what's what?	10	Money for you and your baby	22	Ask Joanne	34
Bonding with your baby	12			Further help	34

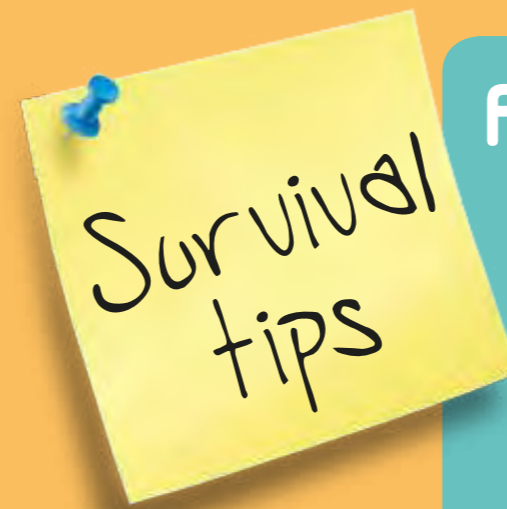
You're PREGNANT

Coping with midwives, hospitals and clinics

There are a range of health professionals to look after you during your pregnancy, the birth and when you go home. They are there to help and support you in making decisions about what is best for you and your baby.

When you first discover you are pregnant, you can make an appointment directly with a midwife. Phone your GP practice or local health centre and ask for an appointment with a midwife. You can also phone the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88**.

You will want to talk about your options for your pregnancy (antenatal) care and your midwife can make all the arrangements for your baby's delivery. The sooner you make your appointment, the sooner your midwife can start supporting you and planning your care.



for coping at the clinic

Sometimes you may have to wait at the clinic so be prepared!

- Download the *Ready Steady Baby!* smartphone app so you can read information on the go. See page 9 for details.
- Take along your partner, a friend, your mum or a good book or magazine to keep you company.
- Take along a healthy snack (a banana, apple or orange is easy to eat on the go).
- If you have another child it would be best to get somebody else to look after them while you're at the clinic.

Your pregnancy (antenatal) care

You will have 7–10 antenatal appointments with a midwife who will check your health and the baby's development during your pregnancy. Every appointment has a purpose. You can find a list explaining each appointment at www.readysteadybaby.org.uk

antenatal means
'before birth'



How do I make an appointment with a midwife?

Phone your GP practice or local health centre and ask to make an appointment with a midwife. Or call the NHS inform helpline on 0800 22 44 88.

The midwife will want to know about your health, previous pregnancies and any medical problems you may have. Remember, they're not being nosy. They just want to give you and your baby the best care possible.

Your antenatal appointments are your opportunity to ask questions – big or small. Write some questions in your antenatal notes so you don't forget to ask them – nothing is too silly to ask.

What happens at your booking (first) appointment?

These are some of the things that will be discussed:

- Any worries you have about your pregnancy or caring for your baby.
- The types of tests you will be offered and the meaning of the test results.
- The birth options available to you.
- Your health and lifestyle (including whether you are drinking alcohol or smoking) and your relationship with your partner.
- What preparation for parenthood classes are available.
- What benefits you are entitled to.

Don't forget antenatal care is free to everyone in Scotland – if you are working you can take paid time off for antenatal appointments (both medical appointments and antenatal classes).

Linda's pregnancy

I found out that I was pregnant with my bonnie wee boy on my 18th birthday. It came as a shock to me that I would be a young mum at the age of just 18.

I felt scared, worried, shocked, excited, panicky and surprised. It took four weeks for it to sink in. I kept buying pregnancy tests roughly about every two weeks just to make sure I was still pregnant. This lasted for about 2–3 months.

At first I wasn't too sure about my midwife, but as time went on we bonded and had a great friendship. I missed quite a lot of my antenatal appointments because I kept forgetting when I had them. The appointments that I did remember were really good because I got to hear my baby's heartbeat, which was amazing, and I found out how he was doing in there. At first I found it difficult to bond with him. As time got on I started to bond with him. I was singing and reading to my baby bump. Every time I sang or read a children's book

Laura's story

Becoming a mum while being disabled has been both full of joy and challenges.

I found that it was important to be fully prepared for before and after the birth, and sometimes this was quite frustrating.

Your midwife might talk to you about involving social work or you might think about asking them for support yourself. You may have mixed feelings about this, but it is good to remember you are entitled to ask for an assessment of your needs to help support you and your baby.

It is useful to ask about any benefits you are entitled to. You can also ask for equipment you might need from occupational therapy. We used a mixture of support, including paid childcare that has been positive for us as a family.

Getting involved with organisations like the Disabled Parent Network can help you meet other parents in the same position as you. Above all, be proud of being a parent. It's your body that has made a baby, and it's amazing being a mum.

Sharing your news

Have you told anyone yet? Remember, while you might be slow to tell, you can get a lot of support from those around you. The baby's dad might find it difficult to accept that you're pregnant, or he might be thrilled. You won't know until you tell him. He could surprise you! Whatever the reaction, at least you'll know where you stand.

Tell someone who you can trust. If you don't feel ready to tell someone you know, there are lots of organisations you can call to get support and information. Contact details are on the back page of this magazine.

When you feel ready, tell a friend or two because sooner or later it's going to become obvious. And it's better if you decide when to tell people rather than people finding out through rumours. Friends know you and love you. They will just want to support you. It might be hard to get the words out, but generally the sooner you tell, the better. Once they know, people can give you the ongoing support you really need.

Give them time and a chance to help and support you.

Keeping healthy

during your pregnancy

Folic acid

Your baby will benefit if you take folic acid supplements before you get pregnant and in the first 12 weeks. This is to help reduce birth defects, such as spina bifida. It is recommended that you take a supplement of 400 mcg (micrograms) of folic acid daily.

Vitamin D

During pregnancy, it's also important to make sure that you get enough vitamin D and iron for strong bone growth in babies. For vitamin D, this is best achieved by taking a daily 10 mcg vitamin D supplement. If you are pregnant and under 18 or receive certain benefits you will get free vitamins through Healthy Start, speak to your midwife.

With **Healthy Start** you get free vouchers for milk, fruit and vegetables and vitamins, including folic acid and vitamin D. Visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Eating well when you are pregnant

When you are pregnant you need to make sure your diet is providing you with enough energy and nutrients to keep you healthy and for your baby to grow and develop.

What to eat:

- plenty of fruit and vegetables
- pasta, rice and potatoes
- protein foods such as meat, chicken or beans
- dairy foods such as milk and yogurt.

Caring for your teeth and gums

It's very important to look after your teeth and gums while you are pregnant.

- Continue to brush your teeth twice a day for at least two minutes using toothpaste containing 1500 ppm (parts per million) fluoride. Remember, spit out excess toothpaste – don't rinse as this won't give the fluoride time to work and strengthen your teeth.
- If your gums bleed, it is important to keep brushing twice a day and use dental floss. If the bleeding continues, contact your dentist.
- If you experience pregnancy sickness, avoid brushing your teeth immediately after being sick as this can wear away the top surface of enamel. Instead, either delay brushing your teeth or rinse your mouth with alcohol-free fluoride mouthwash.
- Register and attend your dentist regularly – remember dental care is free during pregnancy.

Physical activity

It is important to stay active during your pregnancy. If you were active before you became pregnant continue to do 30 minutes a day of safe activities, such as walking, swimming, low-impact aerobics or dancing. If you were not active before you became pregnant you can aim to increase your physical activity gently, for 10 minutes at a time, to build up to 30 minutes a day.

Get active and try to keep a healthy weight. Don't skip breakfast.



Ready Steady Baby! goes mobile

Ready Steady Baby! is now available as a free smart phone app. So it's even easier for you and your partner to find out about pregnancy, birth and early parenthood from the NHS.

The app will give you bite-size information and short videos on:

- your baby's development through your own pregnancy timeline
- keeping healthy for you, your partner and your baby
- top tips to help prepare you both for parenthood
- services which can help you during pregnancy and early parenthood
- communicating with your baby.



Top tips for *dads* and *partners* on keeping healthy

As a dad or partner there are all sorts of ways you can help to give your child the best start in life, and to look after you and your partner's health too.

Smoking

Cigarette smoke is dangerous for babies so if you're a smoker, get advice on how to stop smoking. If you and your partner smoke it will be easier for you both to give up together. If you continue to smoke, don't smoke near your partner, don't offer her cigarettes and don't leave your cigarettes lying around.

Tell your friends and family that you now have a smoke-free home and ask them to smoke outside too.

Visit www.canstopsmoking or call Smokeline on **0800 84 84 84** to get some helpful and friendly advice.

Second-hand smoke

While your partner is pregnant, and once your baby is born, it is important to have a smoke-free home and car. This is one of the best things you can do for your baby and your entire family. Cigarette smoke causes harmful substances to be in the air which can stay in the air for several hours even if you can't see smoke any more. To protect your baby and family from harm you can stop smoking or smoke outside. (Right outside, not just in the doorway!)

Alcohol

There are no safe limits for alcohol in pregnancy. You can help your partner cut out alcohol by cutting out or cutting down on your own drinking during the pregnancy – particularly around your partner.

www.drinksmarter.org has useful guidance on sensible drinking and how to cut back.

Dads and partners care too

'There is one common misconception about young fathers. This is that we are only interested in having sex and not taking the responsibility. These misconceptions are also held by the professionals who deal with young fathers and young mothers as we are often ignored at doctor's, midwife's and other appointments.'
(Sean, young father)

on keeping healthy

Illegal drugs

If you are addicted to drugs, now is the time to get help to stop so that you can be the best possible parent to your child. Help is available to support you. Talk to your GP or visit www.talktofrank.com

Eating well

Eating well is much easier if you're doing it together. It will help keep your energy levels up and it's a good way to start picking up the healthy eating habits you'll want to pass on to your child.

Keeping fit and healthy

Regular exercise (no fewer than three times a week) can help to raise your mood, so think of this as a priority for you and your baby's mum. Find something you enjoy, it doesn't have to be expensive – walking and running are free. Healthy, active parents will help their children be healthy and active all through their lives.

Helpful hints for dads

Ask the mum if she would like you to go with her to the appointments. Think about whether you want to be at the birth or not and talk it through with mum. Remember, you don't have to be – it doesn't suit everyone. Talk it over and find out what is right for both of you.



who's who

and



A simple guide to the people and services you'll come into contact with.

what's what

Being a parent – or when you're about to become one – means that you may need different services or people at different times for help and support. Figuring out who's who and what exactly they do can be quite confusing.

Here's a guide to the range of professionals and other services.

Midwife

For most women, the majority of your care will be provided by a midwife. Midwives are professionals who care for women throughout their pregnancy, during childbirth and after the birth, until your baby is roughly 10 days old. Your midwife will plan the care that is best for you and your baby throughout your pregnancy.

GP (family doctor)

Your GP will continue to provide you with your routine health care throughout your pregnancy. If you haven't got a GP of your own already, make sure you get one whose surgery is easy to travel to when you're looking for one – you'll have a small baby in tow. You could ask someone to recommend a doctor. Once you have found one, contact the surgery and ask to go on their patient list.

Antenatal classes

These are special classes usually run by the maternity hospital to help you prepare for the birth of your baby. They are usually free and can be booked through the hospital or the antenatal clinic. Ask at the hospital if they offer special classes for young parents. You'd usually go near the end of your pregnancy for about 4 to 6 classes and you can go to these without losing any pay if you are working.

Antenatal classes will give you a chance to get advice and information about:

- what to expect during labour
- relaxation techniques and stress management
- feeding your baby
- how to look after yourself once your baby is born
- local groups and classes you can attend to meet other parents like you.

You will also get time to ask any questions you might have.

10

Antenatal clinic

This is the clinic where you'll go for check-ups during your pregnancy. You can make the first appointment by phoning your GP practice and asking for an appointment with a midwife or calling the NHS Inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88**.

Obstetrician/Consultant

Obstetricians are doctors who will help support you if you have complications during your pregnancy.

Dentist

Dental care is free during pregnancy. The dentist and other members of the dental team will be able to offer advice and provide any necessary treatment. They will also introduce you to the Childsmile programme after the birth of your baby, which will help you look after your baby's teeth.

For more information on how to register with a dentist, phone the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88**, or speak to your midwife.

Health visitor

Health visitors (or public health nurses) will support you and your baby at home when your baby is around 10 days old. They may also visit you before your baby is born. They will give you information about the routine health checks and immunisations your baby will be offered and will give you your baby's Personal Child Health Record (or 'red book'). They will be available to answer any questions you may have and give practical advice and support. You can also bring your baby to the health visitor in your local health centre if you need some support or information.

Social worker

Social workers are part of the Children and Families Team and they work with families who need extra support. They are there to work with you and provide help and support if you need it.

Social workers are sometimes based within the hospital or local authority. They can help people with practical advice on financial, social or emotional difficulties as well as on dealing with child protection issues.

Lone parent helpline

Ring our free confidential helpline to know what benefits you can apply for. Our friendly rights workers will help identify everything you are entitled to and can send you free factsheets. Call **0808 801 0323**. Calls are free from landlines and the following mobile networks: Vodafone, 3, Orange, Virgin and T Mobile.

Helpful hints for dads and partners

Expecting a baby can be a stressful, confusing and emotional time for dads too. Sometimes it is hard to know where you fit in. What's the right thing to do? Don't be afraid to ask questions and get advice.

- Talk to your baby before the birth – your baby can recognise your voice from 32–36 weeks of pregnancy.
- Bond with your growing baby. You can hear the heartbeat when your baby is big enough by placing your ear against the mother's lower belly.
- Stay close. Only 5% of women have their babies on the due date so be available at short notice.
- Having a baby can make changes to your love/sex life. It is a good idea to talk about how you are both feeling.
- Dads and partners can also suffer postnatal depression. The pressures of becoming a parent can be overwhelming, so look after your own mental health too, visit www.stepsforstress.org

'I want to remind those people who work with young fathers and families that they need to work together so that young fathers are supported to be with their children every step of the way.'

(Brian, young father)



11

Bonding with

your baby

You and your partner can start to get to know your baby even before they are born.

Bonding is the special close feeling between a baby and her parents.

Did you know – before birth:

- Your baby can recognise your voice before they are born, around weeks 21–26 of pregnancy. When your baby is born, the sound of your and your partner's voice will be the one familiar thing in this big, wide world, and so remember to talk to your baby as soon as they are born. Chat to your baby or sing and play music. They will get to know the special sound of your voice and this will reassure and comfort your new baby.
- Your baby can sense your feelings. When you are excited or anxious, your baby may feel excited or anxious. When you are calm, your baby feels calm.

0–3 months

- Skin-to-skin contact is very important to help bonding. Breastfeeding your newborn baby as soon as possible will

help you to bond. If you're formula feeding, you can hold your baby close while you feed her. Holding your baby next to your skin is good for your baby and will help with early breastfeeding.

- Being together means your baby can learn from watching you. Hold your baby and talk to them – it makes them feel safe. Look at your baby when you talk to them. Pause and wait for your baby to respond.
- Sing to your baby. Babies love being sung to; they enjoy it and it really helps their language development.

3–6 months

- Give your baby your full attention. Time spent face to face with you is the best gift you can offer. Everything your baby learns in the first few months is through one-to-one contact with another human being. You don't need expensive toys because you are your baby's first and most important teacher.

- Sharing songs, rhymes and stories with your baby is a great way to enjoy special time together.
- Make everyday routines into playtime; talk to your baby about what you are doing.

6–9 months

- Talk to your baby face to face – they will start to copy you.
- When changing nappies, bathing and feeding, talk about what you are doing. Your baby will gradually learn to understand words by hearing these words said over and over again in everyday situations.

9–12 months

- Your baby will tell you what they are finding interesting by pointing – talk to them about things they see.
- Take turns when you play with your baby – this is the first step to taking turns in talking.

Your baby will be able to communicate with you from the moment they are born. There are lots of ways you can help your baby communicate with you.

Feeding your baby



It may seem like ages until you actually give birth, but how you will feed your baby is an important decision which can have lifelong benefits for your health as well as your baby's. Your midwife will be able to support you with decisions about how you feed your baby.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the healthiest option for you and your baby and your midwife and health visitor will be able to support you. If you choose not to breastfeed, formula substitutes are available. Whatever you decide, it's important that you are prepared and feel confident about how to feed your baby.

You will be told about the health benefits of breastfeeding for you and your baby. This is not to pressure you into breastfeeding, but to make sure you have all the information you need to make your choice. It can be helpful to talk to other breastfeeding mums and find out what kind of support is there for you.

For more information or assistance, speak to your midwife or call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on **0300 100 0212** and see www.readysteadybaby.gov.uk

Calls to 0300 numbers cost no more than calls to UK numbers starting 01 and 02, and will be part of any inclusive minutes that apply to your provider and call package.

- Exclusively breastfed babies are less likely to have illnesses such as acute ear and gastro-intestinal infections (sickness and diarrhoea) and are also less likely to have chest infections that would need to be treated in hospital.
- Breast milk also contains natural compounds that help to regulate and mature the immune system in a way that helps to prevent the development of allergic conditions, such as eczema (where there is a family history). Formula milk does not contain these natural compounds.
- In the longer term, breastfeeding has been shown to help reduce high blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as to reduce the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Breastfed babies often have improved eyesight and increased alertness because special fats found in breast milk are good for their rapidly growing brains.

Breast milk will protect against serious gut infection and other infections if your baby is premature. The same natural protection is not found in formula milk.

What are the benefits to me?

Mothers who breastfeed have a lower risk of ovarian and breast cancer.

Other benefits include:

- You feel good about providing baby with all its nutritional needs.
- You can be proud that breastfeeding is all your own work.
- It's the best 'convenience food'. Breast milk is always 'good-to-go'; with just the right ingredients and at just the right temperature.
- There are no bottles or teats to sterilise.

- It's free! Mothers who breastfeed don't have to pay for formula milk, bottles and teats
- It can help you lose weight
- It helps reduce the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, cancers and heart disease.

The help you will get

You will be encouraged to hold your baby immediately after the birth and to cuddle your baby close skin to skin (if you are both well after the birth). You'll be shown how to hold your baby (positioning) and how to encourage your baby to take your nipple and breast in his/her mouth correctly (attachment). This will help your baby to feed effectively – and also help you to avoid sore nipples or some of the other problems that new mums can experience when breastfeeding for the first time.

Introducing play@home and Bookbug

play@home books

Look out for your free baby and toddler books (given out by your health visitor) and pre-school book (from nursery). This book contains simple activities and play ideas for you and your baby at home.

Bookbug

Look out for your free Bookbug pack of books when your baby is 16 weeks old. The free Bookbug Baby Pack is given out by your health visitor.

Enjoy sharing books and stories with your baby or try free Bookbug sessions at your local library. Bookbug sessions are free, fun-filled sessions of stories, songs and rhymes for parents and children aged birth to four years. Find your nearest Bookbug session here: www.scottishbooktrust.com/localbookbugsessions



For more information visit www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbug

Coming home

Nobody is born with parenting skills. Everybody has to learn how to feed, bathe and generally take care of their baby.

While you are in hospital, the midwives will prepare you on how to care for your baby when you both go home. Remember it's a learning process and it's something you'll be learning for the rest of your lives! Don't stress about being the 'perfect' parent (there's no such thing). It's OK to be 'good enough'. Just take being a parent one step at a time and enjoy this special time in your and your baby's lives.

The midwife will visit you at home for the first 10 to 14 days and then the health visitor will visit. They can be a great help in advising you about caring for yourself and your baby. Don't be afraid to tell her anything that you are worried about. She has seen it all before and is there to help and support you.

The first few months can be difficult as you lose sleep and have no life of your own, but when your little one eventually smiles up at you it makes it all worthwhile.

Settling a crying baby

- Check if the nappy needs changing.
- Is your baby hungry? Give your baby a feed.
- Is your baby tired? Lie your baby down in the cot/Moses basket for a sleep.
- Is your baby lonely? Chat to your baby in a gentle voice. Hug and cuddle your baby so that they are close to your body. Spend time playing with your baby. This may help soothe them.
- Does your baby need to be winded?
- Skin-to-skin contact can help soothe and comfort a baby and parent
- Put your baby in a sling and walk around.
- Rock, pat or gently rub your baby's tummy or feet.
- Never slap or shake your baby.
- Trust your instincts. If you are worried, contact your health visitor for advice.



with your baby

baby blues

It's perfectly normal to feel a bit weepy or a bit low after the birth of your baby. Remember, your body has been through a lot of changes and your hormones are all over the place. You are likely to be exhausted physically and emotionally. A new baby is a challenge for a woman of any age so ask for help if you need it. Talk to your family and friends and accept their offers of help – time off from baby, help with shopping, a cup of coffee, a chat. Chatting to other mums who have had similar experiences sometimes helps. There may be a mum and baby group your area.

If the 'feeling low' goes on for a bit long – for more than two weeks – contact your GP or the health visitor as you may be suffering from postnatal depression and you might need some professional treatment. Remember, this is a very common condition that lots of mums (and even dads) get and help is available. You can ring Bluebell at Parentline Scotland, Scotland's first Postnatal Depression Helpline on **0900 3457 457**.

Postpartum psychosis is a much less common condition, affecting 1–2 new mums in every 1000 births. Although it is rare, it can be very serious and is usually experienced within the first month of you having your baby. Some of the symptoms include:

- feeling anxious about everything
- delusions (odd thoughts that are unlikely to be true, for example, that people are out to get you)
- hallucinations (which most often consist of hearing voices that comment on your behaviour, are insulting to you or give orders to you)
- irrational thoughts (foolish, silly, unreasonable).

'When my baby was born I was so proud of myself – he was perfect. My boyfriend was actually so proud, he loved his little son. I loved this. I was so thrilled it was perfect for us. In the following weeks I started getting all these bad feelings, they were so horrific. I wasn't happy. I didn't want this. I was so young with such a beautiful son I just couldn't bring myself to bond with my son. I couldn't connect. Eventually my mum persuaded me to go to the doctor and she was great'.

Having a baby is a life-changing experience. Give yourself time to adjust to this change. Being a new parent can be exciting, exhausting, scary, and everything else in between. Our survival guide to life with baby might help you handle the early months of being a parent.

Life

1 Play, talk and read to your baby

Bonding with your baby is so important. Skin-to-skin contact and simply playing, talking and reading to your baby will help your baby learn and develop their language skills. Give your baby a massage – your health visitor will guide you when your baby is ready. You will find some great ideas of how to play in your play@home baby book (given out by your health visitor). Visit www.playtalkread.org for lots of fun play activities to do together.

2 Be prepared

Babies don't wait for anything! It'll save your nerves and your baby's if you try to get into the habit of preparing in advance. Make sure you always have enough nappies, etc. in the house. Keep your baby bag full of the stuff you'll need when you go out. Think about what your baby needs and plan ahead. It really does help.

3 Taking care of you

Looking after your baby is a full-time job in the early weeks and months, but you need to look after yourself as well. You might not be getting very much sleep at night so try to take a nap during the day when your baby sleeps. Try to eat and drink water regularly. Keep food in the house for sandwiches and quick meals like eggs or beans on toast or salads as it may be difficult to get time to cook, especially if you live on your own.

4 See people when you want

You might find people want to visit the baby once you're home from the hospital. This can be lovely but it can also be very tiring for you and the baby. Don't cut yourself off from other people but arrange for them to visit (or for you to visit them) when it suits you and the baby.

6 Get out and about

It's too easy to stay in the house when you've a baby or small child, as it might seem like such a hassle to get organised to go out. It can be good to get out and about, even for a walk to the shops. Just a change of scenery can cheer you up. Wrap your baby up well if it's cold outside and make sure to bring a rain-cover for the buggy. Fresh air is good for you and your baby and the exercise can help you stay in shape. Always take a change of clothes for your baby.

7 Don't try to be a super parent

It takes time to learn how to look after your baby. You might make mistakes to start with. You may not always be able to get your baby to settle or stop crying. You might know other parents whose babies sleep through the night, never seem to cry. Every baby is different and so is every mother. Take time to get to know your baby and to get into a routine.

8 Talk about it

Sometimes after having a baby, or even later when your baby is older, you may feel down in the dumps, stressed or find it hard to cope. Don't keep this all to yourself. Do talk to someone – maybe your partner, mum or friend. If this doesn't help, have a chat with your GP or the health visitor. It's OK to say that you are finding things tough. It's normal. Talking can help. Sometimes it helps to meet and talk to other young mothers. Ask your health visitor if there are any groups to meet young mums in your area.

9 Make time for yourself

There's less free time when you are a mum but it's important to try to make some time for yourself. If you are in a relationship, try to get out together sometimes, text or talk on the phone often if you don't live together. Small treats like sitting down with a magazine, painting your toenails or watching your favourite TV programme can recharge your batteries. As your baby gets into some sort of a routine (and it may take a while) try to pick out half an hour that's just for you.

10 Don't give up on your dreams

If you didn't plan to have a baby at a young age it might seem that your life is not working out the way you wanted. Having your baby doesn't mean that you can't do what you had hoped any more. You might have to slow your plans down or change the way you were going to do things, but it doesn't mean that you have to give them up. You can still do things in your life and be a good mum. Check your local library, Careers Scotland (0845 8 502 502), LearnDirect Scotland (0808 100 9000), local Community Education Centre or Skills Development Scotland (0808 100 1050; visit www.myworldofwork.co.uk). Go for it!

10 top tips for brand new dads and partners



Being a dad is the best thing that's happened to me, I said 'Dadadada' to Emily for months and when she finally did say 'Dada', that was just fantastic.'

So, you're a dad! Your life has changed. It can be exciting. It can be a bit frightening. It can be both of these and more. It can certainly be an amazing experience for you and your child. You'll be learning lots of new stuff. It's the same for any new dad.

- 1 Parenthood is no walk in the park – it's tough – babies either want to be fed, have their nappy changed or they want a cuddle. Don't worry. It will take time but you will eventually learn what your baby wants and needs.
- 2 Make time to spend with your new baby as they grow up. You'll be glad now and in years to come. And so will your child. There are many ways to spend time with your baby and to show that you are interested in what they are doing. For instance, when your baby is very small, bath time can be very special for bonding.
- 3 Learn how to give your baby a massage. Your health visitor will be able to tell you where you can go to learn how to do this correctly. There are also parenting groups that can help you learn new skills to care for your baby and meet dads in the same situation as you.
- 4 Talk to your baby's mother about how much it's actually costing her to provide for the baby. Babies are expensive so try and work out as best you can what's a fair amount for you to contribute every week.
- 5 It is very important to create a smoke-free environment for your baby at home and in the car.
- 6 Manage your drinking because looking after a baby with a hangover is dangerous and not at all pleasant.
- 7 Baby carriers that you can strap on to your front are brilliant. Your baby can feel your warmth and hear your voice and the rocking movement while you move is very soothing.
- 8 It is important to think about the equipment you will need to keep your baby safe in the car and home. Think about spreading the cost – you don't need everything straight away. Your baby won't need things like high chairs yet. Also think about getting some equipment second hand, ask friends and family. However, remember to buy all mattresses and car seats new.
- 9 If you are working, you can take up to six months off for paternity leave. This can start from 20 weeks after your baby is born and only after mum has returned to work.
- 10 All children need lots of love and support. You, as dad, play a big part in providing that love and support. Where dads take an interest in their children's lives, they are telling them they are valued, cared for and important. Spending time with your children gives them a better chance of growing up to be happy adults. Being with your baby will help them learn from watching you; they will enjoy it if you sing to them.

'Babies are productive members of society. They spread optimism and good cheer more effectively than any adult. Help them do their work.'

Alan (father of a 6-year-old)



Money

for you and your baby

What financial help can I get for my baby?

You may be entitled to some of the following:

Child benefit

This is money that is paid to anyone who has children, although there are now exceptions for high earners. It can be claimed from the time your baby is born. It can only be backdated for three months so, if you delay in applying, you could lose out. If you are under 16 years of age, you can still apply. To claim call the Child Benefit Helpline on **0845 302 1444**.

Child tax credit

Child tax credit is money you get to care for your children. You must be 16 years old to apply for child tax credit and you can apply once your baby is born. If you are under 16 years old, whoever claims child benefit for you can also claim child tax credit and child benefit for you and your baby. Child tax credit can only be backdated one month, so it is important to apply at the right time. You can apply by phoning the Tax Credit Helpline on **0345 300 3900**.

Sure Start maternity grant

This is money that helps with buying clothes and equipment for your baby. You must be receiving certain benefits/tax credits to qualify. You also have to apply between 11 weeks before the baby is due up to 3 months after the baby's birth. You can spend the money as you like and, because it is not a loan, the money doesn't have to be paid back. Apply on a special form SF100 available from your local Jobcentre Plus and online at **www.dwp.gov.uk**

The form must be signed by your midwife, health visitor or GP.

What financial help can I get myself?

You may be entitled to some of the following:

Income support

This is money given to you to make sure that you have enough money to live on, if you are not working. It is meant to cover your day-to-day living expenses. You must be 16 years old to apply. You can claim income support by calling Jobcentre Plus on **0800 055 6688**.

Once your youngest child turns 5 years old, you will lose your income support and you will have to claim jobseeker's allowance instead.

Jobseeker's allowance

This is money given to you to make sure you have enough money to live on, if you are not working. Unlike income support, you must be available to work and be looking for work. You will be asked to 'sign on' at your local Jobcentre Plus once a fortnight and you will be asked what jobs you have applied for. You can claim jobseeker's allowance by calling Jobcentre Plus on **0800 055 6688**.

Working tax credit

If you work at least 16 hours a week you may be entitled to working tax credit and help with your registered childcare costs. Contact the Tax Credit Helpline on **0345 300 3900**.

Statutory maternity pay

This is money a woman is paid during the time she is legally allowed to be absent from her work in the weeks leading up to and after the birth of her baby. There is no age limit for applying. Statutory maternity pay is paid for 39 weeks. Speak to your employer.

Maternity allowance

This is a weekly benefit paid by Jobcentre Plus to pregnant women. You may get maternity allowance if you are employed or self-employed and you are not eligible for statutory maternity pay. It is paid for 39 weeks and you have to satisfy two rules: the employment rule and the earnings rule. For more information, speak to Jobcentre Plus, your local Citizens Advice Bureau or the Lone Parent Helpline on **0808 801 0323**.

Healthy Start vouchers

Healthy Start vouchers may be used for formula milk, cow's milk, fresh fruit and vegetables at participating stores. They are given to the following people:

- women under 18 years of age who are at least 10 weeks pregnant
- women 18 years and over who receive certain benefits
- women with a baby under 1 year old
- a child under 4 years of age whose family receives certain benefits.

If you get Healthy Start vouchers, you will also get free vitamins from your local health centre. For more information call **0845 607 6823** or visit **www.healthystart.nhs.uk**

Can I get help with the cost of dental care?

You are entitled to free NHS dental treatment during your pregnancy and for the first year after the birth of your baby.

What help can I get with my housing costs?

Housing benefit is money that can help you pay your rent if you are in a council, housing association or privately rented property. Contact your local council.

What is council tax and how do I pay it?

Council tax is a local tax made by the local authority you live in. It pays for services such as rubbish collection, libraries, roads, transport and leisure facilities. If you are on a low income, you can get help paying your council tax from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Contact the benefit and revenues department of your local authority for more information.

You are not liable to pay council tax if you are a full-time student or under the age of 18. There are other people who can be excluded; seek advice from your local authority or the Lone Parent Helpline on **0808 801 0323**.

What is educational maintenance allowance (EMA)?

EMA is additional financial help for students aged 16 to 19 years who stay on in full-time education after the compulsory school leaving age. A payment is made fortnightly into your bank account and depends on attendance at your school or college. You can get an application pack from your school, college or local authority.

Universal credit

During the course of 2013, the government is introducing a new benefit called universal credit which will replace income support, jobseeker's allowance, tax credits and housing benefit. From 2014 to 2017, people who get the old benefits will be moved across to the new system.

Talk to the other parent about paying a share towards the cost of rearing the child you have had together. Remember, the money is for your child and can be a great help.

If in doubt, ring the Lone Parent Helpline on **0808 801 0323** to talk over what you might get.

There are simple ways to keep track of your spending with a budget calculator: www.moneymadeclear.org.uk/parents/budget/budgeting_for_the_cost_of_children.html

The calculator aims to identify how your spending may change in the first year of your baby being born. For further help on budgeting, call free on **0300 500 5000**.

Young Scot has a good website about money from how to get it into and out of the bank and how to best spend it: www.youngscot.org/channels/money/

Frequently asked questions

If my boyfriend's name is on the birth certificate, am I still entitled to income support as a lone parent?

Yes – having the name of the father of the baby on your baby's birth certificate will not stop you getting income support as a lone parent.

Is it possible to name two women on a birth certificate?

Yes – if your partner is another woman then you will be able to give her name on your baby's birth certificate.

Will my mother still get child benefit for me?

Yes, if you are still in full-time education, your mother can continue to receive child benefit until you reach your 20th birthday as long as you are not claiming benefits in your own right.

How much is maintenance?

There is a new service called Options that gives information and support to help both parents make an informed choice about child maintenance. Their website has a child maintenance calculator (www.cmoptions.org) or you can phone **0800 988 0988**.

There are so many forms – what if I need help filling them out?

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can help with filling in forms.

I don't know how I'm going to manage my money every week – what can I do?

There are different services throughout the country that can help people to manage their money – this can include learning how to budget your money and how best to avoid getting into debt. Contact Money Advice Scotland on **0141 572 0237** or at www.moneyadvicescotland.org.uk or call the National Debtline on **0808 808 4000**

RELATIONSHIPS

Having a new baby can be a wonderful thing but at times it can be really difficult and stressful too.

A baby can have a big effect on a relationship. Lack of sleep can make you irritable and caring for your baby will mean you may have less time for each other. It is common for new parents to feel guilty when they are not enjoying every second of being a new parent. Dads and partners might feel a bit jealous of all the time the baby takes up or that they don't get to spend as much time with the baby as mum. Mums have their own challenges they can feel alone and overwhelmed. But it's important to remember that it's OK to want – and need – to take a break from the baby every once in a while. These feelings are completely normal when life has changed so much.

But these feelings can get worse if new parents don't talk about what is bothering them. It is important that you take time to speak to each other about how you are feeling – good and bad. If you feel you need to speak to someone else you can call Relationship Scotland on 0845 119 2020. They offer support for people experiencing relationship difficulties.

Sometimes arguments can get out of hand. Domestic violence or other forms of abuse of power – for example, being made to have sex when you don't want it, not being able to see friends or family, and being kept short of money – need to be taken seriously. If you feel you are in a relationship where you are being controlled by your partner or are concerned about your safety, contact Scotland Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0800 027 1234. Violence or abuse of power is never acceptable within a relationship.

If you're pregnant right now or have recently had your baby, sex or contraception might be the last thing on your mind! However, once your baby is born it is possible to become pregnant even before your periods start again or even if you are still breastfeeding, so read on...

Safer

SEX



1 Think about it

It's never too early to think about contraception. You can get pregnant as soon as 21 days after you have had your baby.

2 Talk about it

If you are in a relationship it is a good idea to have a chat with your partner to work out what kind of contraception to use. It can be a bit embarrassing to talk about it at first, but not having to worry about becoming pregnant again before you're ready will make it worthwhile. It's easier to be rational and reasonable before you're in the 'heat of the moment'. If you feel uncomfortable discussing safer sex with your partner, then maybe you should wait until you know each other better.

3 There are various kinds of contraception to choose from:

Longer-lasting contraception can last from 3 to 10 years and is the most effective method of preventing pregnancy. These methods are reversible, so if you decide you would like to have another baby you can have them removed and be fertile again within a few days.

- Intrauterine Device (IUD), also known as 'the coil', it's made of copper and plastic, is quickly fitted inside the womb and last for up to 10 years.
- Depo-Provera injection: usually given in the upper arm, and if you are breastfeeding this should not be given until six weeks after your baby is born. The contraceptive effect will last for three months but it cannot be reversed within this time.

- Intrauterine System (IUS), also known as Mirena, this small, T-shaped plastic device releases hormones inside the womb to prevent pregnancy for up to five years.
- Implant, also known as Implanon, a tiny tube that goes under the skin on your arm and releases a hormone to stop you getting pregnant for up to three years.
- Condoms: can be used with other forms of birth control and can also provide protection against most sexually transmitted diseases. Condoms are available free from sexual health clinics and many GP surgeries.
- The pill: if you're breastfeeding, it's recommended that you initially avoid the combined pill as it can reduce the amount of

milk you produce. The mini-pill is safe when you are breastfeeding, although it needs to be taken at the same time every day.

4 Don't get a sexually transmitted infection

The rate of sexually transmitted infections is soaring in Scotland. Always use a condom (keep a supply handy) and take responsibility for your sexual behaviour.

Talk to your doctor or check if there is a family planning clinic near you to help you decide what suits you.

More information is available at www.sexualhealthscotland.co.uk

Difficult bits

Giving up smoking

You and your baby are two good reasons to give up smoking. It isn't easy but the following reasons show why it's definitely worth the effort:

- Quitting is the best single thing you can do for the health of your new baby.
- You increase your chances of having a healthy full-term pregnancy and a healthy baby.
- You'll have more money to spend on you and your baby. Someone who smokes 20 cigarettes a day could save £2000 (enough for a good holiday) if you stop.

Smoking, alcohol and drugs will greatly harm your baby. It won't be easy to give them up, but do your best. Many people use their pregnancies as the push they need to give up – so why not take the opportunity?

Get whatever help you need to do this from the medical staff at the hospital or check out the information in the antenatal pack you'll get at the hospital.

It is important to create a smoke-free environment for your baby, at home and in the car. Smoking in a different room or with a window open does not eliminate the risk of second-hand smoke. The chemicals found in smoke linger long after the smoke has disappeared by sticking to clothes and furniture, so it is important not to smoke where the baby is or will be.

Giving up alcohol

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can be harmful to your baby. There are no safe amounts, so drinking no alcohol during pregnancy is the safest choice. For help and support on stopping drinking alcohol, contact the Drinkline helpline: **0800 7 314 314.**

Drugs

This is really important – if you're using illegal drugs or overdoing prescribed drugs and alcohol, then you need to let the clinic know what you're taking – how much and how often. It's about your health and the health of your baby. It's vital that you get the professional help you need to quit or reduce. People are there for you. Talk to your midwife in the clinic and she will be able to help you find the support you need.

A roof over your head

Living with your family

Living with your family can be really helpful and supportive with the family mucking in to give you a hand. And sometimes the family can help with looking after your baby while you go back to school, training, work or even when taking the odd break. Having your family's support can make all the difference in making your life more manageable and enjoyable. It's also cheaper than living on your own!

Just a note of warning though: be careful not to take your family for granted. Sort out with your family how much you'll contribute towards the cost of running the house and don't assume they'll always be able to babysit. If they are looking after your child while you are studying or at work you might want to do something in return. Don't forget that they have a life as well.

But sometimes living with the family isn't the best idea

For some young parents, living with the family can be difficult. It can add to the stress instead of relieving it. Some families are not good at knowing when to stop giving advice or trying to take over looking after the baby. This can be very annoying when you're trying to work out for yourself how to be a parent and be the most important person to your baby. Or maybe they won't babysit to let you out. Some grandparents may not like to have the child's father around seeing him as 'bad news' in the situation. Or some families just don't get on. All these issues can lead to rows and anxiety.

Living on your own

If you need to move out of home, and you are over 16, you have three choices:

- apply to your local authority housing department for a council property
- apply to any local housing associations for a housing association property
- look for a privately rented property.

Once you get on the 'housing list' for a council or housing association property, it can take a long time to get housed so be prepared to wait. It can be worth the wait as once you get it, it's very secure and less expensive than a private let.

If you plan to rent from a private landlord, once you spot accommodation that might suit you, contact your benefits and revenue department in your local authority to see if you can get housing benefit. A private landlord will want a deposit before you move in.

Local housing allowance (LHA)

There is a different way of calculating housing benefit if you are renting a private property. The LHA is a flat rate set by the council, based on the number of bedrooms and the area you live in. Check with the council to see how much rent they will pay.

If you become homeless then you should contact your local authority immediately for advice, information and access to emergency accommodation:
www.shelter.org.uk

Dads and partners – a home for your baby

If you're not living with the mother of your baby you might want to bring your baby home to your place. You will need a set-up that has enough room and is clean. This may be manageable if you live at home with your parents and hopefully they will help you with this – they are probably bursting to have their grandchild around.

However, it can be difficult if you are sharing a house or flat to have enough space for baby. You may need to negotiate with your house/flatmates to make space for your baby to live in rather than a space where they can just 'stay'.

If you're moving house/flat, be sure to get somewhere with enough space for your baby. Remember, it's going to be your child's 'other home'.



Legal

information

Here are some legal words you might come across as a parent and need to understand:

Parental responsibilities and rights (PRRs)

Parents have rights in order to help them carry out their responsibilities seriously. If you have PRRs then you can make the major decisions about your baby – where the baby lives, what school they will attend, consenting to medical treatment etc.

This means who your baby lives with.

Contact

This means visiting your baby, where you are not living with your child.

This is a payment to the parent with whom your child lives towards the cost of rearing your child.

Working things out

Sometimes relationships don't work out, but it is important (where possible) that your child has the opportunity to have a relationship with their father. You may be able to agree a parenting arrangement which works between yourselves. When this is difficult to agree there are two ways of working out parenting arrangements which will consider the needs of the child, the mother and the father.

Mediation

Mediation is sitting down with a trained independent person who can help you to talk to each other. You can work out good decisions together about your child and work towards your child's best interest. Contact Relationships Scotland on **0845 119 2020** or www.relationships-scotland.org.uk for details of your local service.

Going to court

Try to avoid going to court if possible. This is not the best place to be sorting out family issues regarding your children. Tensions can get very high and often bitter. However, in some cases this is the only option, especially where there is domestic abuse.

It is best to consult a family law solicitor – see www.fla-scotland.org.uk for a family law solicitor in your area. Alternatively see www.slac.org.uk for solicitors who provide help with legal costs (legal aid).

All mothers have parental responsibilities and rights, as do married fathers. If an unmarried father's name is on the baby's birth certificate, then he too will have PRRs. Only a father who is not named on the birth certificate, will NOT have PRRs.

Frequently asked questions

I don't want the father of my baby to see her. Do I have to let him?

It is important that you consider why you don't want your baby's father to see her. Managing difficult relationships can be hard and it takes time, but it is often in the baby's best interests to have contact with both parents. Try to sit down and talk together to see if you could reach an agreement in your baby's best interest. If you feel that your baby's safety may be in danger you can refuse your baby's father contact. If he challenges this it may involve a court hearing, which will put the interests of the child first and consider factors such as domestic abuse, drug and/or alcohol abuse.

If a father does not see his baby, does he have to pay maintenance?

Yes, a father is still liable to pay child maintenance.

Can I choose my baby's name?

If you were not married and the father does not have parental responsibilities and rights, then only the mother has the right to choose her baby's name. If both parents have PRRs, then they should choose the name together.

I am worried about all these legal issues; who can tell me more?

If you want further information about any of these issues call the Lone Parent Helpline on **0808 801 0323**.

For free advice and information on legal matters relating to children in Scotland, contact the Scottish Child Law Centre on **0131 667 6333**. There is a freephone helpline for under 18s: **0800 328 8970**.

If you need a solicitor look in the Yellow Pages or see: www.fla-scotland.org.uk. You can also visit Families Need Fathers at www.fnf.org.uk or call **0300 0300 363**.

Does my baby's father have any rights?

If you were married to the baby's father, or if his name is on the birth certificate that was registered on or after 4 May 2006, then the father will have parental responsibilities and rights. If his name is not on the birth certificate then he does not have parental responsibilities and rights.

Can I study after baby

Of course studying or training with a young baby will not be as easy as when there was only you to think about. But it's not impossible. It's hard work – but worth it. With a qualification, you can get the kind of work you enjoy and both you and your baby will be better off.



Are you still in school?

The education authority has a legal duty to ensure that every child under 16, and those aged 16–19 who wish it, continues to receive an education. If you are pregnant, this duty still remains. You may be entitled to help under the Additional Support Needs Act.

How each authority deals with pregnancy at school will be different. Your views and wishes should be taken into account.

If you decide that you do not want to go back to school, then home tuition may be arranged but this can be limited to a few hours of teaching per week.

Some authorities offer education in a specialist unit as an alternative to remaining in school.

What happens if you are excluded from school because you are pregnant?

Pregnancy is not a reasonable ground for excluding you from school. If this happens you can appeal to the education authority or write a complaint to the Scottish Education Secretary.

What if you miss school due to your pregnancy?

You will probably miss school for at least some time before and after the birth of your baby. The school should support you getting back to education after the birth of your baby.

Is your baby due around exam times?

Don't give up if your baby is due near exam time. There are special arrangements that can be made to make taking exams as comfortable and easy as possible. Some young mums have even done their exams in the maternity hospital! Speak to your school.

Who will mind my baby?

Sometimes this is the hardest decision of all. You'll want to be sure that your baby is getting the best possible care when you're not there. And, if you have no one in your family who is able to look after your baby, registered childcare is very expensive. Some local authorities will cover your childcare costs when you go back to school.

Literacy and numeracy

The Big Plus can provide help to people who would like to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. There is a free phone number 0808 100 1080, where you can phone for advice and can put you through to local tutors. The support offered by the tutors is wholly dependent on what you want to achieve.

The tutors are based in community settings, such as libraries or colleges and it's not like being back at school – it is very flexible, relaxed and friendly.

It's still your life and your choice.

Always remember that what you do after your baby is born is your choice. A new baby will bring a lot of changes to your life and you'll need plenty of energy. You may decide to remain at home full time with him or her. Or you may decide to combine being a parent with school or training. Look for advice – but don't feel under pressure to do anything which you believe is not best for yourself and your baby at that time. Remember, you can always go back to education or training when you feel more ready. If you are a lone parent you will be expected to look for work when your child is 5 years old so you may want to improve your qualifications so you can get a better job.

Your education does not have to end because you have become a mother.

Returning to education or training

If you decide to return to school or training you'll have lots to think about. What course will suit you best? Can you go part-time or full-time? Will you be able to afford it? Who will look after your baby? Can you get help with childcare and other costs?

What is the educational maintenance allowance?

The educational maintenance allowance is money available to 16–19 year olds who continue in further education after the compulsory school leaving age (16). You get paid fortnightly during term time and payments depend on your school attendance. You can get an application pack from your school or college.

There are other study options that may be open to you, depending on your age. These could include studying at a college of further education or entering a training programme. Start by speaking with your school's careers adviser. You can ring the Lone Parent Helpline on **0808 801 0323** to talk about your options and the money you can get to help you study.

For free and independent advice on courses, training and funding call LearnDirect Scotland on **0808 100 9000** or visit their website at www.learndirectscotland.com

You can ring Skills Development Scotland on **0808 100 1050** to talk about your career options, finding training or for a friendly chat about your options, or visit www.myworldofwork.co.uk

Ask Joanne



Got a baby/pregnancy/life question?

My baby's dad won't visit

Dear Joanne

I had a baby three months ago and everything was OK with the baby's dad until he wanted to go out with his friends every night and doesn't want to visit me or the baby in my house any more. He says that my mother gives him dirty looks and doesn't make him feel welcome but that he loves me and the baby. I don't want to lose him but what can I do?

Emily

Dear Emily

A father can feel very left out when the baby arrives and this applies especially to young fathers when they are not made welcome. However, it is important for your baby that her dad is around as much as possible. You could try talking to your mother about how important it is for your baby to have dad around. Remember that it is not adding people to children's lives that is difficult but taking important people away. Gently encourage her to welcome dad to the house as it is important for your baby to have him on board. Talk to the dad about seeing the baby away from your house – maybe in his house. That way your baby could get to know dad and his family as well. Set times for visiting and encourage him to make the effort.

My mother

bosses me around

Dear Joanne

I had a baby last month and I am living with my parents. My mother keeps bossing me around and even though I'm 17 and a half she takes over completely with the baby. My friends say I'm lucky to get this help, but I feel very down and don't know what to do and don't want to start a row with my mum.

Tara

Dear Tara

It's perfectly normal to feel down after the birth of your baby. If your mum is not letting you care for the baby that can add to your feeling low. Your mum probably still thinks of you as her baby and hasn't grasped the fact that you are now a mother yourself. At a quiet time of the day when the baby is settled, tell your mum calmly how you feel. You could suggest that if she taught you how to look after the baby it would be great. Pick your time carefully and avoid getting into an argument.

How can I see my baby?

Dear Joanne

My girlfriend's parents don't want me to be involved, so how can I see my baby?

Paul

Dear Paul

It can be very difficult if you and the baby's mother are no longer together and the grandparents don't want you to be around or involved in the baby's (or their daughter's) life. These situations can cause a lot of distress and heartache for any father being prevented from seeing his child. Remember, more than anything else it is important to first think about what would be in your child's best interests. And it is generally in a child's interest to be in touch with both parents.

Sometimes sitting down with a mediator to try and sort out contact arrangements can help. For details of local family mediation services in your area contact Relationships Scotland on **0845 119 2020** or **www.relationships-scotland.org.uk**

If you still aren't able to see your child, you could ask a court to give you a contact order. Unless there is a really good reason why you should not have contact, a sheriff will decide where and when the contact will take place.

How do I manage my daughter's behaviour?

Dear Joanne

My daughter Chloe is 3 and a half. Recently I met a great guy who is 22 and has a daughter with his previous girlfriend. Everything is fine until he tells Chloe off when she pulls at things or answers me back. We had a row about it and he said he would deal with her as he does his own daughter, if I won't. I don't really know how to manage her and I'm not really sure if she is being bold or not. What should I do?

Catherine

Dear Catherine

It is very difficult to manage a child consistently and it can be even more difficult when someone who is not her parent starts doing it. Your boyfriend is not Chloe's dad so he doesn't have the authority to deal with her. This does not mean that he has nothing to do with her. He can be her friend but he needs to take a back seat in this particular aspect of parenting. Explain this to your boyfriend and agree how to address the issues at a time when Chloe is not listening.

Chloe is not bold, she is just behaving normally for her age. She is exploring her boundaries – seeing how far you will let her go. It is a sign that she is alert and alive. So you need to learn how to set limits, how to show Chloe in a respectful way how far she can go and where to draw the line in showing respect to you and to others. Children who learn this early are generally more secure in themselves. You could check through your local school, clinic or health visitor to see if there are courses on parenting you could do which should be of some help. Parenting courses can be useful for parents of all ages, not just young families.

There is lots of support and further help out there. When you don't know who to turn to, there are lots of national and local organisations who can help you with advice, support and counselling.

further help

Useful contacts

The following organisations may be able to put you in touch with local sources of help in your area. Call them for assistance and a friendly chat or where they exist have a look at the information and advice they provide online.

Smokeline: **0800 84 84 84**

Breastfeeding Helpline: **0300 100 0212**

Lone parent helpline: **0800 801 0323**

National Debtline: **0808 808 4000**

Scottish domestic abuse national helpline (24 hour): **0800 027 1234**

Childline (happy to accept calls from anyone up to the age of 18): **0800 1111**

www.readysteadybaby.org.uk

www.readysteadytoddler.org.uk

www.immunisationscotland.org

www.healthystart.nhs.uk/

www.eatwellscotland.org

www.playtalkread.org

www.scottishbooktrust.com/

www.child-smile.org.uk

www.domesticabuse.co.uk

www.relationship-scotland.org.uk

www.wellscotland.info/

www.stepsforstress.org

www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk

www.directgov.co.uk

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk

www.dppi.org.uk/

www.capability-scotland.org.uk/

www.interfaithscotland.org/

http://n-p-n.co.uk/index.htm

Sexual Health Scotland – get further support and find out about pregnancy and sexual health services in your local area. There's an easy way to do this – visit www.sexualhealthscotland.co.uk and type in your postcode.

NHS inform is a national health information service for the public in Scotland. Phone the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88** or visit www.nhsinform.co.uk

NHS 24 provides health information for Scotland to patients in need of urgent advice and care during the out-of-hours period when their GP surgery is closed. Call **NHS 24** on **08454 24 24 24**.

Get back into learning

If you want to get back into learning but aren't sure where to start see www.myworldofwork.co.uk or visit your local Skills Development Scotland centre or call **0808 100 1050** or visit www.learnirect.co.uk

Get a copy of our publications

Lone Parents Rights Guide – a series of factsheets containing useful information on benefits, tax credits, housing, childcare, going back to work and child maintenance.

Education – money for further and higher education courses and nursing courses.

Holidays – holiday suggestions for lone parents.

Lone fathers – information about what to do when you become a lone father.

Trust funds – list of trust funds for education courses, individual and family need, holidays.

For a free copy of any of these factsheets, phone the Lone Parent Helpline on **0808 801 0323**.

One Parent Families Scotland
13 Gayfield Square
Edinburgh EH1 3NX

Tel: **0131 556 3899**

Email: info@opfs.org.uk

Website: www.opfs.org.uk

