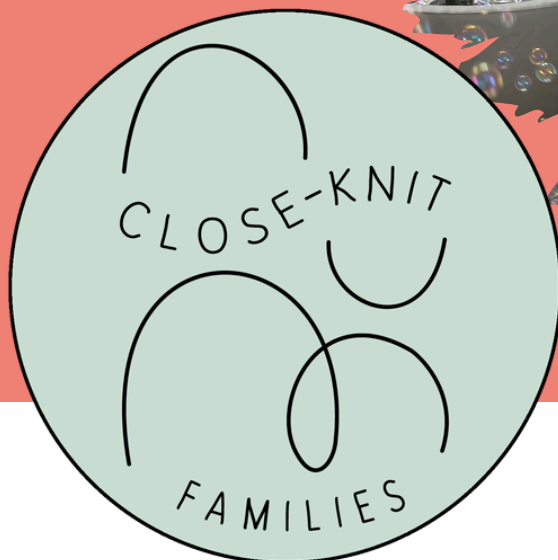


CONNECTING PARENTS
AND CHILDREN



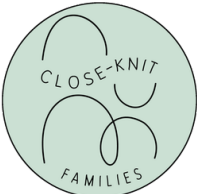
IMPACT REPORT

**For the period 1st May 2025 to 30th
April 2026**

**Helping babies and those who
care for them to have
supportive relationships and
positive experiences**



Contents

The logo for Close-Knit Families is a circular emblem. It features three stylized, interlocking loops of yarn in a light green color. The words "CLOSE-KNIT" are written in a small, sans-serif font across the top of the loops, and "FAMILIES" is written across the bottom.

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What we do, why we do it and how we do it



Our Mission & Why It Matters

Our mission is to help babies, and the people who care for them, to build strong, loving relationships and positive everyday experiences from the very start. When babies and their caregivers feel safe, supported and connected, families become more resilient and communities grow stronger and healthier.

We focus on early relationships because they shape children's wellbeing, development and confidence, laying foundations that influence lifelong outcomes in health, learning, employment and emotional wellbeing. By nurturing these foundations early, we help create positive patterns that can benefit future generations.

Who We Work With & Why

We work with babies, children, young people, parents and the wider community. We exist to support and strengthen family relationships and environments, particularly for families facing challenges, such as isolation, poor mental health or poverty.

What We Aim to Improve

Our work is rooted in relationships, research and real life. We seek to improve the knowledge and understanding of those who care for, live and work with babies; to strengthen parent-child relationships; to improve parent and child wellbeing; to reduce social isolation; and to increase families' access to positive experiences that support children's development.

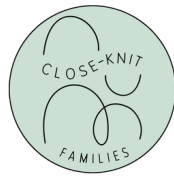
Where We Work & Our Wider Impact

Based in the Tees Valley, while reaching other areas through our resources and training, we are committed to creating lasting, community-wide change. We strengthen early relationships and influence the systems that shape the environments around families, supporting lifelong wellbeing.

What We Do

To achieve our mission, Close-Knit Families delivers:

- Co-produced resources, including videos.
- Training and education on parent-baby relationships, baby brain development and parent and child wellbeing.
- Peer support groups where families can share experiences and build networks.
- Community events and activities that foster connection, support wellbeing and reduce isolation.
- Resource provision and signposting, including guidance materials and referrals to specialist services.
- Advocacy and partnership working to improve environments and systems around babies and families, particularly in the Tees Valley.



WHY OUR WORK MATTERS

The first 1001 days (from conception to a child's second birthday) are a uniquely sensitive and vulnerable period for babies and their caregivers. Any parent can find this stage overwhelming, and every family deserves support, especially those facing additional pressures such as poverty, isolation, poor health, or a family history of adverse experiences. These stressors can negatively affect parent wellbeing, the parent-baby relationship, and in turn a baby's early development.

Early relationships and everyday experiences play a vital role in shaping children's development, yet not all parents and caregivers have access to the knowledge, support or environments that help them build these foundations. Some parents may feel unsure how to support their baby's development, particularly if their own experiences of being parented were difficult or if they are facing mental health challenges. Without supportive relationships around them, early parenthood can quickly become an isolating experience.

For some children, early environments can be affected by inconsistent caregiving, parental stress, domestic abuse, parental mental health difficulties or time spent in care. These experiences can disrupt emotional regulation, attachment, learning and long-term wellbeing. Adverse childhood experiences can also increase the likelihood of difficulties later in life, including challenges with mental health, relationships, and addictions. Supporting families early helps to reduce these risks, preventing problems not only for individuals but across communities over time.

Although families are doing their best every day in the Tees Valley, deprivation, more children in local authority care, unemployment and lower school readiness are everyday realities that place extra strain on families and the communities around them.

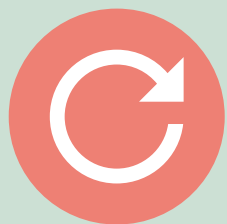
Although support services exist, many are overstretched, under-resourced or difficult for families to access. Some parents feel unsure about where to turn or may mistrust services due to past experiences. Limited access to opportunities, family-friendly spaces and supportive community networks can further restrict families' ability to thrive.

In summary, with support early on, the strengths families already have can really grow. However, without the right support at the right time, these challenges can have long-term consequences for children, including difficulties with emotional regulation, reduced school readiness, poorer health outcomes and limited life opportunities. Strengthening early relationships, increasing access to positive experiences, and building supportive community networks are essential to improving outcomes for babies, children and families across the Tees Valley and to creating healthier, more resilient communities for future generations.



Our Impact

IMPACT SUMMARY: May 2025-April 2026



£100,750
turnover



6
grant funders



1
philanthropist



100%
of parents who attended our
workshops understand
more about baby brain
development (Sample of 21)



248
direct
interventions
with parents



237
direct
interventions
with
practitioners



19
babies
through The
Village project



OVER 450
online views of our
poem animation "How
can you build my
brain?"

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK:

'It was a very relaxed and good session. I learned about different ways to bond with my baby' – **Parent**

'I liked that the session was interactive. I've heard things I've never heard before' – **Parent**

'I like this lady's knowledge and we enjoyed learning from her' – **Parent**

'A lovely, relaxed informative session. I loved the videos' – **Practitioner**

'The Village is so welcoming, calm, and full of gorgeous activities for babies and adults to do, in a lovely safe space.' – **Practitioner**

'Close-Knit Families share key important messages such as the importance of connecting with their babies as this is the platform for the future of the family. The training focuses on the importance of those initial connections and interactions, looking at what can be done in the neonatal environment to support those connections.'

Sarah Brooks- Northern Neonatal Care Coordinator



Our Impact

Events and activities

This last year has been focused on strengthening our foundations as a new charity, continuing our existing delivery and expanding with a new community offer in Redcar & Cleveland known as 'The Village'.

We worked directly with over 200 parents, partnering with Thrive at Five's and Redcar & Cleveland Council's Family Hubs Bumps & Babies events, delivering workshops, talks and sessions across Teesside with North Tees Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership, South Tees Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership, the Genesis Project, Creative Minds, Family Focus, Connect 360 and others.

'The session helped me understand the importance of talking to a baby for development'. -Parent

**'I will be kinder to myself and understand how I affect my baby'.
-Parent**

'I will start singing and doing activities with my baby'. -Parent



Additionally, in mid-March we started our school term-time 'The Village' project in Redcar. It is a free service where we provide support for expectant parents and families with babies under one in a warm and welcoming environment. This includes a weekly Chill, Chat & Play drop-in with simple play activities, resources and signposting to local support, alongside Baby Beginnings, a three-session pregnancy group helping parents connect with their baby, build confidence and prepare for newborn life. By the end of April, we had engaged with 32 parents and carers and 19 babies. This project enabled us to employ a new staff member which has had a very positive impact on service delivery and capacity. 'The Village' is being externally evaluated by charity Children's Voices In Action.

What do parents say about Chill, Chat and Play and Baby Beginnings?

'I like the lovely, friendly space with lots of different activities'

'The volunteers are made for the job. Everyone is lovely and lots of activities and information going on. The cuppa and toast is an extra bonus.'

'I like the nice calming environment'

'I like that it is very relaxed for parents and entertaining for babies'

'I like the clean new toys'

One parent commented that prior to Baby Beginnings and learning about baby brain science, they hadn't thought about that before and had thought baby was 'like a potato' just feeding and sleeping, they now understood the importance of responding to their baby's needs.



Images taken by Chris Booth & The Teesside Charity

We have also reached hundreds of parents and families through our resources. These have been shared by Thrive at Five, Children's Foundation Baby Boxes, the South Tees Baby Essentials project, other partnerships and through our online content with over 1.5k followers. This year we have boosted our reach and been engaging new demographics by joining Tik Tok and regularly posting on LinkedIn, in addition to Facebook and Instagram.

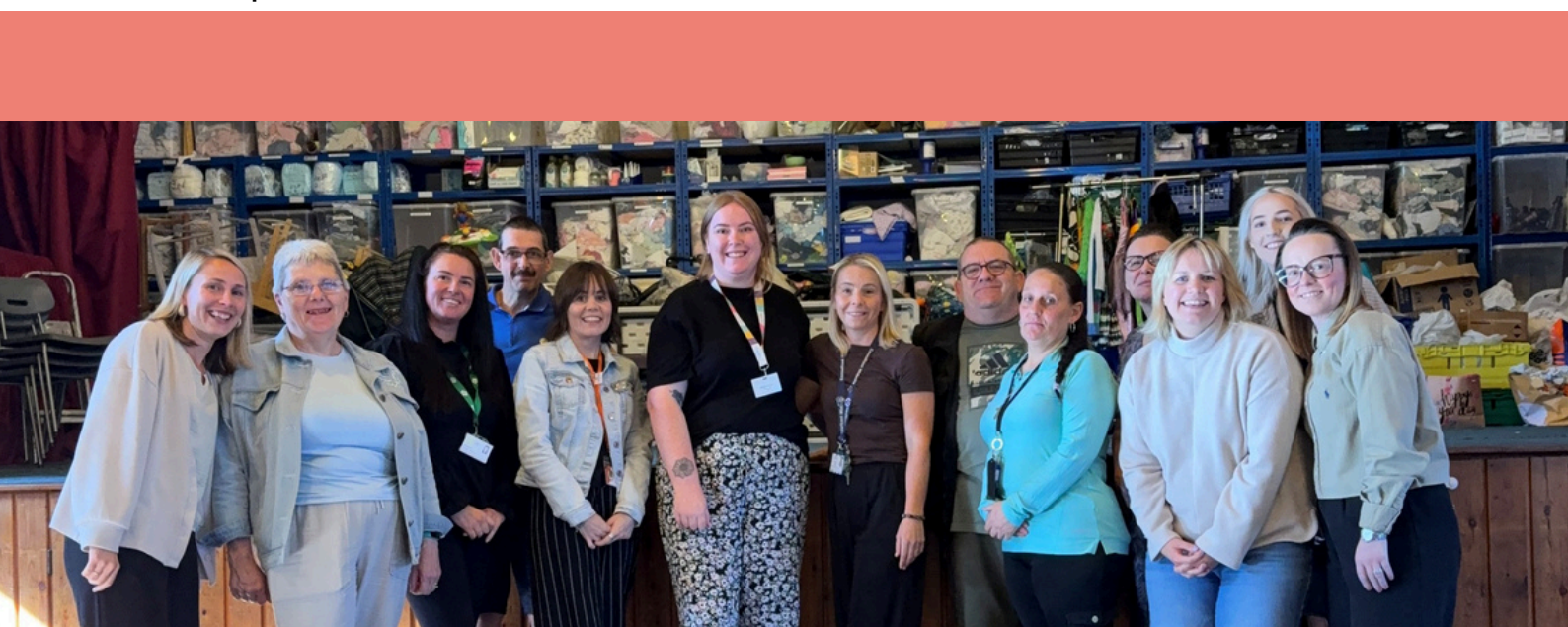
Through our workshops and online webinars, we have equipped over 200 practitioners such as Family Action, North Tees Special Care Baby Unit, Local Government Association Communities of Practice, Stockton Child Poverty Network and a local Reducing Maternal Inequalities conference.

'I will use these resources with my families'. -Practitioner

'An engaging and practical session'. -Practitioner

'The session gave me time to think about my own well-being and what helps me be well'. -Practitioner

We have been supporting babies and their families in the area by contributing to local strategic meetings, such as Beth chairing the Baby Bank Partnership meetings, convening a working group to organise a reducing child poverty in the Tees Valley conference and contributing to the Best Start in Life strategic plan through Redcar & Cleveland Council's Early Years Partnership.



In November, we delivered sessions with students attending the River Tees Multi-Academy Trust alternative provision schools so that, as parents of the future, they understand how early relationships and experiences can affect a baby's development and later life. Seventy-two per cent, of the school students (sample size of 22) said the session helped them understand more about baby brain development. When asked what they would do differently when they are with a baby now students said they would...

'Watch how I speak'

'Explain more with my words and actions'

'Make sure they know I am a safe place'

'Interact more'

We have continued to strengthen our charity by refining our business plan, finalising our theory of change and building additional organisational support through voluntary support of supervision from an advisory group member.



OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

'I want to see every child live the best life possible.'

-Volunteer

'Every child deserves to grow up feeling loved, safe and supported, and I love that Close-Knit helps build those relationships from the very beginning. It's something I'm incredibly proud to be part of.'

-Volunteer

Behind Close-Knit Families is our own village - our volunteers, whether that is welcoming families, supporting our sessions or sharing our resources, they help us engage with babies and parents across Teesside. Some roles are more behind the scenes, such as our fantastic trustees, those who serve on committees or our advisors. Their care and commitment show that relationships really do make things happen, and our volunteers make them happen every week. We were so grateful to all our volunteers, and we couldn't do it without them - thank you to everyone who has volunteered for us in this time.



KEY FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

Our work would not have been possible without the generous support of UnLtd, the Albert Hunt Trust, Tees Million & the Cohen Fund, the National Lottery Community Fund, the Teesside Charity and the Grocers' Charity. We are deeply grateful to each of them for enabling the work shared in this report.

A special mention goes to a generous donor whose support has fundamentally shifted the capacity of our organisation. We are grateful to the Centre For Social Justice who connected us with this philanthropist.

Close-Knit Families and the work we do would not exist without your help, thank you.



Future Plans

Over the next few years, we want to focus on our sustainability and to meet the needs of those we support. We want to increase our capacity to deliver well and to strengthen our income streams.

We aim to –

- Continue to deliver an impactful service

We will benefit babies, parents and families directly, by equipping those who care for or support families in any capacity, and by influencing the wider systems around them.

- Respond to evaluation feedback and implement changes accordingly

We will deliver programmes that meaningfully and positively impact babies and their families. We want to be flexible and to tailor our work to needs identified through 'The Village' project evaluation.

- Strengthen our team

We already have a brilliant team; we will strengthen our offer and create more capacity as an organisation by employing key staff members and building a stronger volunteer base.

- Secure additional income streams

We will seek long- term funding and strengthen other income streams as our current grant funds for project and core costs will end by March 2027 .

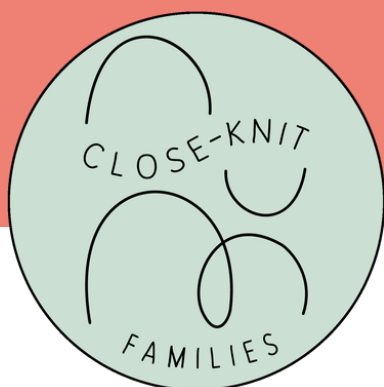
These goals will help create a future where babies have the loving, responsive relationships they need to do well now and as they grow, creating positive ripple effects that strengthen families and contribute to a healthier society for generations to come.



CONNECTING PARENTS AND CHILDREN



Image taken by Chris Booth & The Teesside Charity



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