

# 'BEFORE BECOMING A PARENT'

(B4BP)



Newsletter No. 1

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Dear All

You might know about 'Before Becoming a Parent' (B4BP). The project was set up to help **prevent** emotional distress in future babies, children and parents by preparing young people about the **realities** and **emotional needs** of parenthood well in advance. Much has been written over the years about this idea but not much is being consistently and universally done about it. We aim to help change that!

We are pleased to let you know that B4BP is becoming an independent charity, with the remit to work anywhere in the UK. We will send newsletters as we progress. (Do let us know if you prefer not to receive them).

*'I love the project. It's fun and a better way of learning about being a parent'.*

14 year old school girl, Walthamstow



*'We could start even earlier by teaching parenting and relationship skills to teenagers to get the next generation of parents child-ready, well before they have to put these skills into practice.'* **Duchess of Cambridge** <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/21/duchess-cambridge-teenagers-should-taught-parenting-skills/>

*'Attachment determines our ability to love, our social and emotional development, our core self-worth and our very perception of life. It underpins our capacity for kindness or cruelty. Adverse parent-child relationships can be repeated throughout life'.*  
*Margot Sunderland*

## About B4BP

B4BP is an innovative, unique course for all young people about the emotional needs of babies, children and parents and how best to meet them. Our popular course can contribute important strands to the new compulsory *Relationships and Sex Education* (RSE) secondary school curriculum from September 2019.

### Given that . . .

- most people have children (and some also have fostered, adopted or step-children)
- many don't realise what it takes to meet the attachment and emotional needs of their babies, children and themselves well enough and have not received consistently good parenting themselves, so have no model
- there is little or no thorough preparation anywhere for parenthood, even though it is one of the hardest jobs (if not **the** hardest) that most of us will ever have
- the results and costs of inadequate or harmful parenting are enormous in all respects: emotional, financial, social and physical health problems of all sorts. These then get handed down to the next generations
- most teenagers go to school, so we have a captive (and willing!) audience
- there is a high rate of teenage pregnancy in the UK
- and a high rate of single parent families with no support from extended family members or the community
- child and adolescent mental health problems are on the increase
- if all teenagers were given well-taught, vivid, long-enough classes about the realities of parenting **in good time**, to enable them to reach a deep understanding of attachment and emotional needs and how to meet them, there is at least a chance that some of them will remember some of what they learn, once they have had their first baby, mostly within five to ten years' time after leaving school
- teaching this subject in every type of school is the only way we can reach all types of young people, in all social classes .....

.....this *truly early* intervention could help *prevent* at least some psychological and social harm in the future. This would help improve the emotional well-being and the mental and physical health of future generations.

‘The students really enjoyed the course.’

*Teacher, Leyton*



*‘People forget what you said and what you did. But they never forget how you made them feel.’ Maya Angelou*



### **New book**

**We are writing a book, ‘[Preparing Young People for Parenthood: How To Do It and Why It Isn’t Being Done](#)’. If you would like to be interviewed or complete a questionnaire about your experiences of parenthood and/or views about B4BP, please get in touch.**

## ***What we have done so far***

We have carried out varied pilots at four co-educational secondary schools - McEntee (Walthamstow), Lammas (Leyton), Rushcroft Foundation (Chingford), George Mitchell (Leyton) - and at the Arts in Education youth club (Leyton). The results were encouraging, including a positive evaluation by the University of East London.

## **What We Offer**

- Work with males and females from 13 years old
- Groups of about 12, up to about 30
- We will deliver the course in all settings: mainstream, state-funded, academies, private, public, free schools, alternative provision; youth clubs and youth projects of all kinds; criminal justice system
- The course can be suited to the needs of the setting (half-day taster, intensive short course, weekly for one year or beyond)
- The course is delivered by experienced drama workshop leaders
- Experiential methods include: trust building exercises, drama, role play, forum theatre, visits from young fathers & mothers with babies for discussion & questions, observation of relationships between babies & parents/carers, use of creative arts, visits by baby & child care professionals, buddying nursery children if time allows, taking home a life-like baby doll for the weekend, 7lb bag of flour for each student to keep with them, anonymous questions answered, folder of information about current & future support, emotional support as needed, optional informal ‘homework’, a quote to take home, B4BP film club at lunchtime/after school, end-of-course presentation to other classes/assemblies.

## **Fees and Funding**

- **The fee is agreed in discussion with the setting. We do not want any young people to go without this course due to costs.**
- Over the years, as a former project of the charity Carefree Kids, we have received grants from Awards for All, Network for Social Change, Ironmongers’ Company, Royal Society of Arts, the Kathleen Laurence Trust and two private donors. We have some funds to help provide the work and can train and support staff to deliver the course.

## **And for primary school children**

In partnership with the charity B.A.S.E. ®Babywatching UK, we offer a very low cost course to primary schools. Research shows that the course increases empathy and sensitivity and decreases anxiety and aggression, making it likely that children will become better parents. A mother and baby visit a class once a week for 20-30 minutes for two to three terms. Children and their class teacher observe and discuss the emotional development of the baby, the meaning of its behaviour and the relationship between mother and baby. A group leader from Babywatching facilitates. School staff are encouraged to train as group leaders, embedding the project in the school at minimal cost.

**We would like to work with other organisations and to talk with groups, institutions and individuals doing similar or related work. So do get in touch with us!**

Ros Kane, B4BP Development Worker 0208 555 5248 15 Matcham Road, London E11 3LE roskane@btinternet.com  
*Patrons: Sir Richard Bowlby, Dr Christopher Clulow, Dr Clare Gates, Sue Gerhardt, Lord David Ramsbotham, Dr Rowan Williams*

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