

# Local authority early years team of the year



## Winner The Northamptonshire Baby Room Project, Northampton

Challenging the common notion that ‘babies don’t do anything’, this innovative programme, which combines evidence-based research with excellence in early years practice, has led to significant changes in baby room environments and interactions with babies. Practitioners have transformed their work by understanding and implementing knowledge of brain development. It is a clear example of very early intervention that will have a positive and lasting impact.

The joint project is run by Northamptonshire local authority’s ‘Learning Achievement and School Improvement’ Early Years Team and Northamptonshire Educational Psychology Service. So enthused were practitioners by the immediate and sustained changes they were able to make in their settings and on their interactions with babies that they wanted to extend the project to parents and children’s centres, who are now enthused by the project too.

The county is beginning to see evidence from Ofsted inspections of outcomes being

improved in settings that have implemented the programme. One inspector commented on the very high-quality interaction and the environment at a children’s centre. He was struck by the enthusiastic way in which staff talked about the babies.

Christine Whelan, head of Croyland Children’s Centre, Wellingborough, said, ‘Parents commented that they had gained some deep insights into their child’s development and the way they tune in with their baby. Professionals noted the sense of energy, enthusiasm and commitment generated by the project.

**‘Professionals noted the sense of energy, enthusiasm and commitment generated by the project’  
Staff member**

‘What seemed to confer strength and power to the whole project was the real intimacy of the experience for all involved – parents and professionals entering a real dialogue about babies.’

### Highly commended Stoke Speaks Out, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

A high incidence of children entering nursery with significantly delayed speech and language skills is being successfully addressed by this project, jointly funded by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and PCT. The project is a good example of partnership working and has had national recognition, including being cited by National Communication Champion Jean Gross as ‘best practice’ in its field.

**Finalist  
North Yorkshire County  
Council Early Years Team,  
Ripon**

**Criterion**  
Open to any local authority team working to provide or support early years and childcare services