



York Teaching Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Training for professionals: *The ICON message*



# Acknowledgement

This training has been developed in collaboration between York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and the National ICON group.

We would like to thank Dr Suzanne Smith, Founder of ICON for giving her permission to share and adapt her training slides used in this learning package.



# Aims of this training session

- This training is designed to equip you with the knowledge, information and skills that you will need to discuss **ICON: 'Babies cry, you can cope'** with parents and carers
- The training will help you to:
  - share the message that crying in babies is normal
  - support parents/carers to soothe their baby
  - support parents to cope with a baby's crying
  - understand more about Abusive Head Trauma
  - understand it is a form of child abuse



# Background

- Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) is abuse and is preventable
- Crying is a known trigger
- 70% of babies who are shaken, are shaken by men
- Our goal for ICON is to communicate to parents/carers that they can expect crying, prepare for it and cope with it
- The target is to reduce the incidence of AHT triggered by crying



# Some “crying baby” facts

- Parents may, at some point, struggle to cope with their baby’s crying
- Evidence shows that in some extreme cases, crying can lead parents to feel like they may actually harm their child: This is an emotional response of both anger and frustration
- It is important to offer an alternative response to help control these extreme emotions



# Some more “crying baby” facts

- Crying is a normal part of child development which can have a significant negative impact on the emotional health of parents
- All babies will cry a lot from the ages of 2 weeks to 3-4 months, but this can vary from baby to baby
- Crying seems to peak in the late afternoon and early evening... but this can vary



# Some more “crying baby” facts

- Crying is sometimes misdiagnosed as colic
- No one is really sure why babies cry so much in this period... research is ongoing
- An immature nervous system may make babies more irritable... Crying is their overt means of expression!
- ICON is an evidenced-based delivery method



# Factors that can trigger AHT

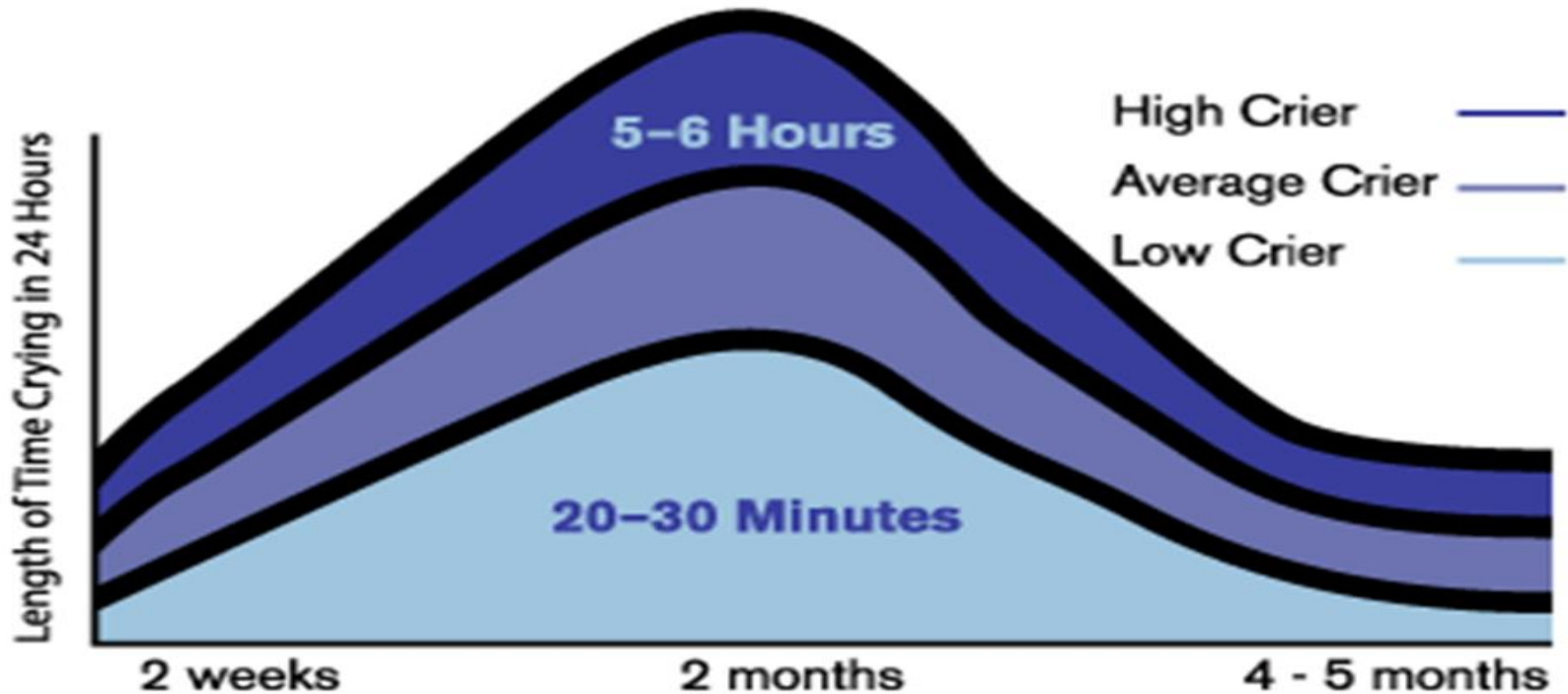
- In one survey, half of the mothers interviewed reported that their child's crying made them feel like harming their child. Such feelings are rarely acted on, but it can be a trigger for a parent to actually harm and abuse their child
- Research shows that babies are most likely to be shaken when they are 2-3 months old... the time when babies cry the most.





# Normal Crying Curve

## Curves of Early Infant Crying 2 Weeks to 4 - 5 Months



# But... It's not just the baby

Excessive infant crying can be associated with:

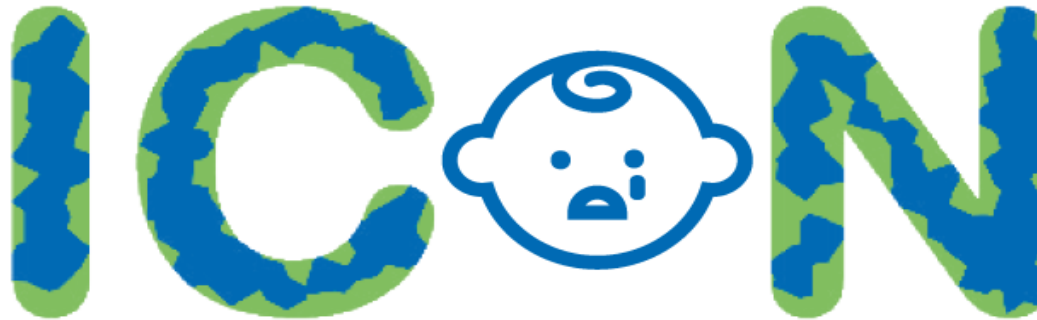
- Parental stress
- Depression
- Possible relationship problems
- Feelings of guilt, inadequacy and helplessness

Remember... this is a new experience for most parents



# What is ICON?...The 4 key points/messages

\*Version 5 updated 19/11



Babies Cry, You Can Cope!



**I**nfant crying is normal and it will stop!

Babies start to cry more frequently from around 2 weeks of age.

The crying may get more frequent and last longer.

After about 8 weeks of age babies start to cry less each week.




**C**omfort methods can sometimes soothe the baby and the crying will stop.

Think about are they:

- hungry
- tired
- in need of a nappy change

Try simple calming techniques such as singing to the baby or going for a walk.



It's k to walk away if you have checked the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you.

After a few minutes when you are feeling calm, go back and check on the baby.



**N**ever, ever shake or hurt a baby.

It can cause lasting brain damage or death.

If you are worried that your baby is unwell contact your GP or call NHS 111.

Speak to someone if you need support such as your family, friends, Midwife, Health Visitor or GP.

# More factors about Abusive Head Trauma (AHT)

- AHT is the most common cause of death or long term disability in babies
- 24 out of 100, 000 hospital admissions for babies are due to abusive head trauma
- 200 children are killed or hurt annually in the UK
- These figures certainly underestimate the real numbers involved



# BBC video on ICON in Yorkshire

- <https://youtu.be/IAIrtu-pBSk>



# Are some babies more at risk than others?

Research shows that the most at risk babies are:

- Baby boys
- Babies under 6 months old
- Babies born pre-term or at low birth weight
- Babies who have more contact with health services



# Cost

- Human and Emotional
- Financial
  - Hospitalisation
  - Long term health and educational needs
  - Medical equipment
  - Legal proceedings
  - Child Safeguarding Practice Review
- Loss of societal productivity

# How can professionals help parents?

- By offering ICON as an alternative to a situation where frustration (often linked to tiredness) can lead to abuse
- By discussing the issues raised
- By talking through the key points/messages in the ICON acronym





# Introducing ICON to a parent/carers

- Help parents understand that crying is normal... all parents can feel like this
- Explain that crying is a normal part of development
- Reassure parents that babies are not doing this on purpose....they are not “naughty”
- Support parents in coping with their own emotions and stress by developing a “Coping with Crying Plan”
- Teach parents soothing and safe sleep techniques
- Inform parents/carers about sharing the ICON 4 key points/messages with anyone who cares for their baby.



# Some soothing techniques

- <https://vimeo.com/316785801>



# When to discuss ICON

- ICON will be discussed at several “touch-point” for all families throughout the antenatal and postnatal journey by the midwifery/SCBU and Health Visiting staff.
- However all professionals working with families with newborn babies can discuss ICON as this will further reinforce and strengthen the 4 key points/messages.
- It is particularly important for services that are working and have a good relationship with new fathers do this.



# Video

- <https://youtu.be/Q3mc0FhrNF8>

# ICON

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f ICONCOPE  
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I

Infant crying is normal and it will stop!  
Babies start to cry more frequently from around 2 weeks of age.

C

Comfort methods can sometimes soothe the baby and the crying will stop. Is the baby hungry, tired or in need of a nappy change?

It's ok to walk away if you have checked the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you. After a few minutes when you are feeling calm, go back and check on the baby.

N

Never, ever shake or hurt a baby.  
It can cause lasting brain damage or death.

**Babies Cry,  
You Can  
Cope**



Speak to someone if you need support such as your family, friends, Midwife, Health Visitor or GP.

ICON  
**Babies Cry. You Can Cope!**

Infant crying and  
how to cope



Information for  
parents and carers  
**ICON**  
Babies Cry. You Can Cope!

# ICON website

- The ICON website is a great resource that you can find further information and videos and parents can be signposted to:

<https://iconcope.org/>

