



The Evidence Behind our Four Pillars

Why practical support matters in the early years

Helping parents give children the best possible start in life

The first five years of life are critical to a child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. While poverty does not determine parenting ability, it can create practical barriers that make it harder for parents to provide the safe, nurturing environments in which babies and young children thrive.

Children growing up in poverty are more likely to experience poorer health, reduced educational outcomes and fewer opportunities than their peers. Families may struggle to afford everyday essentials, such as a safe place for a baby to sleep, nappies, weather-appropriate clothing, books or a suitable pram. These practical barriers can limit children's opportunities to learn, play, access healthcare and participate in community life.

MammaKind's Four Pillars of Practical Parenting Support are informed by published evidence, together with the experiences of the families and professionals we work alongside. They explain how removing practical barriers can help parents give children the best possible start in life.

Pillar 1: Safe Sleep & Rest - Why safe sleep matters

A safe place to sleep is one of a baby's most fundamental needs.

Research shows that good quality sleep supports healthy brain development, physical growth, memory, learning, attention and emotional regulation. Safe sleeping environments also reduce the risk of sudden infant death and help parents establish healthy sleep routines from the earliest days.

Families experiencing poverty may not always be able to afford appropriate sleeping equipment. By providing cots, Moses baskets, new mattresses and bedding, MammaKind helps parents create safe sleeping environments for their babies.

Evidence

- [The Lullaby Trust – Safer Sleep for Babies](#)
- [NHS Start for Life – Safer Sleep](#)
- [Trust for London – Child Poverty in London](#)

Pillar 2: Health & Hygiene - Why health and hygiene matter

Good health begins with meeting children's everyday needs.

Families experiencing poverty often face difficult decisions about spending on nappies, toiletries and clothing. Without these essentials, children are more likely to experience discomfort, poor hygiene and preventable health problems.

Providing practical essentials enables parents to keep children clean, comfortable and appropriately dressed, supporting their health, dignity and wellbeing while reducing some of the pressures associated with financial hardship.

Evidence

- Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
- NHS Start for Life
- The Food Foundation – Food Insecurity and Child Health
- Trust for London – Child Poverty in London

Pillar 3: Play & Early Learning - Why play and early learning matter

Parents are children's first teachers.

Research consistently demonstrates that reading together, talking and learning through play support children's language, communication, cognitive development, creativity, confidence and school readiness.

Families experiencing poverty are less likely to own children's books and educational resources. By providing books, toys and age-appropriate play resources, MammaKind enables parents to create rich learning opportunities within the home and supports children to develop the skills they need before starting school.

Evidence

- Education Endowment Foundation – Early Years Toolkit
- National Literacy Trust
- BookTrust
- Trust for London – Child Poverty in London

Pillar 4: Access & Opportunity - Why access and opportunity matter

Children learn through everyday experiences beyond the home.

Families experiencing poverty can face practical barriers that prevent them from attending healthcare appointments, Family Hubs, libraries, children's centres, nursery and play opportunities.

Providing items such as prams, baby carriers, clothing and footwear helps parents access services, community support and early years opportunities that contribute to

children's physical, social and emotional development while reducing isolation for families.

Removing these practical barriers helps ensure children are able to participate in the opportunities that support healthy development during the early years.

Evidence

- Department for Education – Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme
- Trust for London – Child Poverty in London
- The Childhood Trust – Child Poverty in London
- Child Poverty Action Group

Learning from families

Published research is only one part of our approach.

We continually learn from the families, volunteers and professionals we work alongside. Their experiences help us understand the practical barriers parents face and shape how our service develops.

For example, feedback from Black families highlighted the need for affordable afro-textured haircare products. In response, MammaKind developed a partnership with Cantu Beauty to provide these items as part of our hygiene bundles. We also tailor every bundle to the child's age, developmental stage and family circumstances, recognising that there is no "one size fits all" approach to supporting parents.

Alongside this, our client surveys consistently demonstrate the difference practical support makes. Families report reduced financial pressure, feeling less worried about providing for their children and high levels of satisfaction with the support they receive. These findings suggest that by removing immediate practical barriers, parents are better able to focus on meeting their children's needs during the critical early years.

Our commitment to learning

MammaKind is committed to continually improving our service. We listen to the experiences of the families and professionals we work alongside and draw on relevant evidence to inform our approach. We use this learning to strengthen our support and ensure every bundle helps parents give their children the best possible start in life.

Reading

The evidence informing our approach includes guidance and research from:

1. **Trust for London – Child Poverty Data**
<https://trustforlondon.org.uk/data/child-poverty/>
2. **Joseph Rowntree Foundation – UK Poverty 2025**
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2025-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk> (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)
3. **The Lullaby Trust – Safer Sleep Overview**
<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/baby-safety/safer-sleep-information/safer-sleep-overview/>
4. **Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health – Child Health Inequalities and Poverty**
<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/key-topics/child-health-inequalities-poverty>
5. **In Kind Direct – A Clean Start in Life**
<https://www.inkinddirect.org/reports/a-clean-start/>
6. **The Food Foundation – Food Insecurity Tracking**
<https://foodfoundation.org.uk/our-work/food-insecurity-tracking>
7. **Education Endowment Foundation – Early Years Toolkit**
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/early-years-toolkit>
8. **National Literacy Trust – Early Years**
<https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/early-years/>
9. **BookTrust – Bookstart**
<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/bookstart/>
10. **Department for Education – Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-guide>