

Baby signing

...the new way to communicate with your tot

Communication between baby and parent is a vital part of the unique connection that forms the strong human bond.

We can talk to our baby and we know they understand us – from birth a baby can be soothed by gentle tones and can become distressed if they hear shouting.

But they can't speak to us until their vocal chords

develop – and that does not usually start until around the age of 18 months.

That is where baby signing bridges the gap. Babies are capable of communicating from as early as six months using signs.

Local mum Andrea Hefford from West Hunsbury is now offering classes in Northampton.

She said: "Baby signing is a major child development

phenomenon widely considered to have a major impact in respect of IQ and later, literacy skills.

"It essentially gives babies a language with which they can share their thoughts and needs with their parents well before they can talk."

Research claims babies who sign are happier and more confident, cry less, have fewer temper tantrums and their communication development is faster.

Andrea who is mum to 14 month old Archie became interested in baby signing after reading articles about it.

"I wondered if I could really do what it said," she said. "I began signing basic signs with my son to see if he too could communicate back with me. After about 8 weeks I was so thrilled when he started to use some signs."

And she added: "Now he lets me know when he wants his drink, where things are that he wants and when he wants to be picked up or go upstairs for his bath."

Andrea became so passionate about baby signing that she wanted to share it with others, and so has trained to become a teacher of baby signing.

"It's a fantastic way of communicating and the classes are great fun," she said. "The classes are all themed and use stories, songs and puppets to allow the carer and baby to develop this method of communication."

The recommended age to start baby signing is six months old. The classes are 45 minutes each week and participants can do the basics in a six-week course. This costs £40 for six weeks. The basic course can then be

followed up with club classes where more signs are learnt.

Both parents can go along, or grandparents or carers, and information on each sign taught is provided in a handout so whoever attends can teach the other parent, carers or siblings too. It does not have to be the same adult going along each time.

The classes are based on a programme by Dr Joseph Garcia who is believed to be the world leading authority on baby signing.

Andrea added: "It's given me such pleasure to see my son communicate. I can see the pleasure that he gets from telling us with signs and seeing our reaction each time. It's definitely a great way to strengthen the bond between us and reduce the frustrations of not knowing what he wants."

Anyone interested in finding out more about Babysigning or joining one of her classes can contact

Andrea on 01604 706942



Sign for 'milk'



Sign for 'eat'

WHERE & WHEN?

☆ Hardingstone Village Hall, High Street, Hardingstone Mondays - 1.30 to 2.15 Next courses start 19th June and 31st July.

☆ Mount Pleasant Church, Kettering Road, Northampton Tuesdays – 9.30 to 10.15 Next courses start 6th June and 18th July

☆ The Pastures Center, Acre Lane, Kingsthorpe, Northampton Saturdays – 10.00 to 10.45 Next courses start 3rd June and 15th July.

Places can be reserved in advance for when the baby reaches six months old. 20 minute taster sessions are available, showing how the classes will run and giving parents a chance to ask any questions.