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UK hospital bans cooing at babies

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28 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

UK hospital bans cooing at babies

BNE: A hospital in Britain has banned visitors from cooing over newborn babies and asking mothers questions. The Calderdale Royal Hospital in the town of Halifax said its decision was to protect the human rights of newborn babies and to reduce the risk of infection. Debbie Lawson, the hospital's spokeswoman, told reporters: "Cooing should be a thing of the past...these are little people with the same rights as you or me." She added: "Infection control was also a key part of the message as the unit deals with very small babies with very vulnerable immune systems."

Politicians and maternity experts have strongly criticized the new "safeguards". The British government's representative for the area, Linda Riordan, said the measures were totally crazy. She told the local *Halifax Courier* newspaper it was the mother's decision to decide who could coo at her new baby. New mothers at the hospital said they were astonished that visitors could not ask questions about their babies or their own health. A British parenting charity, the National Childbirth Trust, said the move was totally unnecessary.

WARM-UPS

1. I'M A BABY: You are now a baby (again). Walk around the class and talk to the other "babies" about your lives. What's good or bad about baby life? What's the hospital like? What have you done in your life so far? Do you like the doctors and nurses? Have any strange people come and cooed at you?

2. RIGHTS: What kind of special rights does each of the following groups have? Do they have special rights the other groups do not have? What special rights should they have?

- | | |
|------------|---------------------|
| a. Babies | f. Women |
| b. Animals | g. The disabled |
| c. Humans | h. The elderly |
| d. Iraqis | i. English students |
| e. Trees | j. Other |

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Hospitals / Britain / newborn babies / cooing / decisions / human rights / infection / things of the past / crazy decisions / parenting / hospital visitors

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. BABY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "baby". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. BABY RIGHTS OPINIONS: Do you agree with these opinions? Discuss them with your partner(s).

- Babies have separate and special rights.
- Baby rights are the same as those covered by human rights.
- The idea of baby rights is a totally crazy one.
- Cooing at newborn babies abuses their rights.
- Anyone who coos at newborn babies in hospitals should pay a fine.
- Hospital visitors should not touch newborns as it risks infecting the infants.
- The mother should be the only one to decide who can coo at her baby.
- Cooing at babies is natural. It's important for a baby's early development.

6. PROTECTING RIGHTS: Spend a minute or two writing down all of the things adults do to newborn babies. Share your list with other students. Discuss which three of these things adults should not do so that babies' rights are protected.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. A British hospital has banned visitors from cooing at newborn babies. T / F
- b. The hospital says babies' human rights need to be protected. T / F
- c. A spokeswoman wants visitors who coo at babies to pay a fine. T / F
- d. The spokeswoman said the new rule was to control infection. T / F
- e. British politicians said the new baby safeguards are good. T / F
- f. A politician said mothers could not decide who could coo at her baby. T / F
- g. Mothers at the hospital were happy with the new policy. T / F
- h. A parenting charity said the move was unnecessary. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| a. banned | weak |
| b. risk | disease |
| c. infection | amazed |
| d. key | protection |
| e. vulnerable | chance |
| f. maternity | completely |
| g. safeguards | moves |
| h. measures | important |
| i. astonished | prohibited |
| j. totally | motherhood |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. has banned visitors from cooing | criticized the new "safeguards" |
| b. to protect the human | the past |
| c. reduce the | not ask questions |
| d. a thing of | rights of newborn babies |
| e. babies with very vulnerable | decision to decide |
| f. experts have strongly | totally unnecessary |
| g. totally | immune systems |
| h. it was the mother's | over newborn babies |
| i. astonished that visitors could | crazy |
| j. the move was | risk of infection |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WHICH WORD: Strike through the incorrect word from the pairs in *italics*.

UK hospital bans cooing at babies

BNE: A hospital in Britain has *banned* / *fanned* visitors from cooing over newborn babies and asking mothers questions. The Calderdale Royal Hospital in the town of Halifax said its decision *was to protect* / *produce* the human rights of newborn babies and to *increase* / *reduce* the risk of infection. Debbie Lawson, the hospital's spokeswoman, told reporters: "Cooing should be a thing of the *future* / *past*...these are little people with the same rights as you or me." She added: "Infection control was also a *lock* / *key* part of the message as the unit deals with very small babies with very vulnerable *immune* / *community* systems."

Politicians and *maternity* / *materials* experts have strongly criticized the new "*safeguards*" / "*lifeguards*". The British government's representative for the area, Linda Riordan, said the *tapes* / *measures* were totally crazy. She told the local 'Halifax Courier' newspaper it was the mother's decision to decide who could coo at her new baby. New mothers at the hospital said they were *abolished* / *astonished* that visitors could not ask questions about their babies or their own health. A British parenting *chair* / *charity*, the National Childbirth Trust, said the *move* / *mode* was totally unnecessary.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'safe'** and **'guard'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WHICH WORD? In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "BABY RIGHTS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about babies and whether they have separate rights.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- banned
- rights
- reduce
- past
- key
- vulnerable
- strongly
- representative
- mother's decision
- astonished
- parenting
- unnecessary

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you first read this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Have you ever thought about babies' rights?
- d. Do you think babies have separate rights?
- e. How are babies different from children?
- f. Are you good with babies?
- g. Do you think there should be a United Nations meeting on babies' rights?
- h. Don't you think babies need to be cooed at?
- i. How would you feel if you could not coo at a new niece or nephew?
- j. Do you think cooing is better for the baby or the cooer?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Is the hospital right to protect small babies from infection?
- d. Do you think this measure would be popular in your country?
- e. Do you think it's fair that visitors cannot ask a mother about her health?
- f. Do you think cooing should be "a thing of the past"?
- g. Do you think hospitals are "totally crazy"?
- h. Do you think babies suffer when someone coos at them?
- i. Have you read about other totally crazy decisions recently?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

BABY RIGHTS ROLE PLAY: This role play is to discuss whether or not cooing at newborn babies should be banned. Team up with classmates who the same role as you. Develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins.

Introduce yourself to the other role players.

Role A – HOSPITAL STAFF (IN FAVOR)

You believe babies have special rights are not legislated for. You think cooing is bad for babies and their sleeping patterns. You also believe cooing is harmful to a baby’s speech development. You know many babies develop infections because visitors touch them. Some babies die.

THINK OF MORE RIGHTS OF BABIES.

Role B – CHILD CARE EXPERT (AGAINST)

You think the idea of banning cooing is totally crazy. Cooing is a natural part of human nature. Babies need cooing to make them feel loved. Banning cooing means babies miss the chance of bonding with relatives. People have cooed at and touched babies for thousands of years.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY BANNING COOING IS WRONG.

Role C – FATHER

You are very angry. Hospital staff cannot ban you from talking to your newborn child. Hospital staff cannot stop you asking your partner about her health. You think hospital staff have nothing better to do than to make ridiculous and unnecessary rules.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO COO.

Role D – BABY

You hate strangers you have never met saying stupid things to you. You cannot talk to or understand the strangers. You wish they would stop it. You’ve had enough of them picking you up when you’re trying to sleep. If that happened to bigger people, it would be assault. You want and demand your rights.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE MORE RIGHTS.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

In pairs / groups, discuss whether you really believe in what you said while you were in your roles.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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BNE: A hospital in Britain has _____ visitors from cooing over newborn babies and asking mothers questions. The Calderdale Royal Hospital in the town of Halifax said its _____ was to protect the human rights of newborn babies and to _____ the risk of infection. Debbie Lawson, the hospital's spokeswoman, told reporters: "Cooing should be a thing ____ _____. ...these are little people with the same rights as you or me." She _____: "Infection control was also a _____ part of the message as the _____ deals with very small babies with very vulnerable immune _____."

Politicians and maternity experts have _____ criticized the new "safeguards". The British government's representative for the _____, Linda Riordan, said the measures were _____ crazy. She told the local *Halifax Courier* newspaper it was the mother's _____ to decide who could coo at her new baby. New mothers at the hospital said they were astonished that _____ could not ask questions about their babies or their own health. A British parenting _____, the National Childbirth Trust, said the move was _____ unnecessary.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on this story. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. BABY RIGHTS: Make a poster outlining the special rights of babies. Show your posters to your partners in your next class. Did you all write about similar things?

4. LETTER: You are a baby. Write a letter to the head of the British hospital about her decision to afford you more rights. Ask for other rights that she missed. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. T c. F d. T e. F f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| a. banned | prohibited |
| b. risk | chance |
| c. infection | disease |
| d. key | important |
| e. vulnerable | weak |
| f. maternity | motherhood |
| g. safeguards | protection |
| h. measures | moves |
| i. astonished | amazed |
| j. totally | completely |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. has banned visitors from cooing | over newborn babies |
| b. to protect the human | rights of newborn babies |
| c. reduce the | risk of infection |
| d. a thing of | the past |
| e. babies with very vulnerable | immune systems |
| f. experts have strongly | criticized the new "safeguards" |
| g. totally | crazy |
| h. it was the mother's | decision to decide |
| i. astonished that visitors could | not ask questions |
| j. the move was | totally unnecessary |

WHICH WORD?

UK hospital bans cooing at babies

BNE: A hospital in Britain has *banned* / ~~fanned~~ visitors from cooing over newborn babies and asking mothers questions. The Calderdale Royal Hospital in the town of Halifax said its decision *was to protect* / ~~produce~~ the human rights of newborn babies and to *increase* / *reduce* the risk of infection. Debbie Lawson, the hospital's spokeswoman, told reporters: "Cooing should be a thing of the *future* / *past*...these are little people with the same rights as you or me." She added: "Infection control was also a ~~lock~~ / *key* part of the message as the unit deals with very small babies with very vulnerable *immune* / *community* systems."

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