



No parent should navigate the journey of parenthood alone.

Free, specialist-led exercise classes that rebuild strength, support mental wellbeing, and connect new parents — babies welcome.

Startstrong Fitness CIC is a community interest company delivering **free, grant-funded parent & baby fitness classes** across Ipswich, Colchester and Stowmarket. Sessions are led by pre- and postnatal specialist coaches and designed around the realities of early parenthood: babies attend alongside parents, all equipment is provided, and exercises are adapted for pregnancy, caesarean recovery, pelvic-floor concerns and every fitness level. The result is a low-barrier space where physical recovery, perinatal mental wellbeing and social connection happen together.

— Reach at a glance

1,450+

Families supported since 2023

190

Sessions delivered

~86%

Average session attendance

3

Towns across Suffolk & Essex

Free

Grant-funded — no cost to attend

Demand outstrips supply

1,569

places booked

399

turned away to waiting lists

64%

of sessions ran at capacity

— What we deliver

Parent & baby fitness

Circuit-based sessions for strength, endurance and mental wellbeing. Baby stays nearby — no separate childcare needed.

Postnatal recovery

Physical and mental recovery after birth — caesarean and pelvic-floor aware — at a pace that respects each body.

Prenatal support

Adapted exercise through pregnancy, including support for preeclampsia, gestational diabetes and higher-BMI parents.

Community & connection

A regular, welcoming group where parents meet others going through the same stage and build belonging.

— Who we reach

Ipswich

Colchester

Stowmarket

- Pregnant women and new parents — mothers and fathers, all fitness levels
- Parents recovering from birth, including caesarean recovery
- Parents experiencing isolation, low mood or postnatal anxiety
- Families who cannot otherwise access childcare for exercise · babies up to ~18 months

— What parents tell us

Feedback is drawn from a **100-response parent questionnaire** and from publicly posted reviews (5.0 average across 10 reviews). Parents consistently describe three benefits — emotional wellbeing, physical recovery, and reduced isolation — alongside the practical value of being able to bring their baby.

"A cornerstone of my postpartum recovery... a lifeline."

— Roxie H.

"She's brilliant at adapting the exercises to everyone's needs."

— Charlotte R.

"A great way to get out of the house and meet other mums."

— Jemma C., Ipswich

9.0/10

Reduced anxiety

85% rated 8+

9.1/10

Improved mental wellbeing

90% rated 8+

8.8/10

Felt less isolated

81% rated 8+

9.4/10

Physical health improved

94% rated 8+

Self-reported, scored out of 10 · 100-response parent questionnaire · "not applicable" responses excluded (the anxiety measure reflects the 80 parents for whom it applied). Formal, independently measured outcome data is in development through the University of Suffolk partnership.

— How we align with commissioning priorities

Perinatal mental health

Structured, low-barrier social contact and gentle activity — both recognised protective factors for postnatal wellbeing.

Family Hubs

A free, accessible entry point for postnatal parents — including those who may not engage with clinical routes alone.

Start for Life & the first 1,001 days

Regular local contact and gentle activity in the critical early window — one component of the wider family support ecosystem.

Health inequalities

Free at the point of access, removing the financial and childcare barriers that often block postnatal fitness and support.



— Recognition & partnerships

- **Featured by BBC News** — coverage of our free "bring your baby" classes supporting parents across Suffolk and Essex
- **University of Suffolk research partnership** — an ongoing evaluation partnership running to 2030, building independent evidence of impact
- **Delivered by specialist coaches** — CPPC-certified pre- and postnatal coaches, not a one-person operation

Grant-funded — keeping classes free for every parent

Startstrong is funded through grants and community funding, which is what keeps sessions free at the point of access. Current and recent funders & supporters include the National Lottery Community Fund, Ipswich Borough Council, and a range of regional health and community funders. **We would welcome a conversation about commissioning, funding or establishing a referral pathway.**

Reach and operational figures are Startstrong's own records; review themes are drawn from publicly posted parent feedback and a parent questionnaire. Formal, independently measured outcome data is in development through the University of Suffolk partnership.