

# The University of Hertfordshire Welcomes RealCare Babies

The University of Hertfordshire's BSc Hons Nursing (Children's) Programme wanted to demonstrate what caring for a newborn is like in real life to their students. A practical approach to baby care and parenting is required in addition to theory, especially when empathy and understanding are some of the key skills tutors want to teach.

The Programme aimed to provide the students with the opportunity to experience some of the demands of infant care to develop insight into parenting.

The Programme addresses the issue of how to apply the theory of baby care in real-life and provides a hands on approach to learning how to:

- Care for a RealCare Baby and be responsive to its needs.
- Understand and experience potential parental feelings when caring for an infant.
- Consider how the experience of caring for a RealCare Baby may enable the student to develop more insight into parenting.
- Provide a reflective account detailing student learning and its future application to the support that may be provided to parents in clinical practice.

The students took their RealCare babies home for a period of 30 hours, which helped them see exactly what it is like to parent in a home situation. The real-life experience that the RealCare babies deliver is something that a textbook just can't provide!

The University teachers were surprised at how seriously the student took the experience. We think that demonstrates just how close to reality the experience is.

*"It helped teach empathy to students and show them the reality of parenting."*

- Dr. Lisa Whiting, Professional Lead



## Students' perspectives

The students reported enjoying the whole experience and having benefitted from it.

Taking a RealCare baby home changed the students' views on how easy it might be to look after a baby. It helped them have a greater appreciation of the demands that parents can face.

## Lecturers' View

The RealCare baby programme helped overall with the course by providing an "ideal simulated practice package" for BSc Hons Nursing (Children's) students. The University of Hertfordshire is now considering wider usage of the programme.

When used frequently, the university thought it was good value for money.

The Children's Nursing Programme aims to enable students to understand and appreciate the parental perspective. The babies were an integral part of the course as a practical teaching tool and an experience that proved to be beneficial for all involved.

