About cleft lip and palate

In early pregnancy, different parts of a baby's face develop separately, and then join together. If some parts of the face don't completely join, the baby is born with a cleft.

A cleft lip is one or two notches or gaps in the upper lip. A cleft palate is a gap in the roof of the mouth. A baby can be born with a cleft lip, cleft palate, or both a cleft lip and palate.

Around 1,200 babies are born with a cleft each year in the UK. That's three every day.

What causes a cleft?

Usually, a cleft is caused by a combination of many different genetic and environmental factors, that can't be predicted or prevented. It's very unlikely a baby's cleft was caused by anything the parents did or didn't do.

How is it treated?

Babies born with a cleft are assessed and treated by specialists in NHS Cleft Teams around the UK. They will usually need one or more surgeries to close the gap left by the cleft, and may need further treatment into adulthood. Adults born with a cleft can return to the specialist Cleft Teams at any age, for more help and treatment.

How can you help?

CLAPA is a small charity with no government or NHS funding. We rely on people like you raising funds to keep our vital services going.

Can you help CLAPA be there for families like yours, for years to come?

CLAPA.com/Donate

Get in touch

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CLAPA
Cleft Lip & Palate Association

One in 700 babies are born with a cleft in the UK

About CLAPA

The Cleft Lip and Palate Association (CLAPA) is a national charity supporting people born with a cleft, and their families, in the UK.

For a lifetime with cleft, CLAPA is there with you.

For parents, carers and families

CLAPA.com/Parents

- Special bottles and teats for babies born with a cleft, including a free Welcome Pack for new families.
- Parent Support Service, with one-to-one support from trained volunteers.
- Online counselling.
- Facebook support group with 10k+ members.
- Information and resources about growing up with a cleft, with advice and stories from other parents about coping with treatment.
  - Online events, including support groups on themed topics, wellbeing events, and skills workshops.
    - Special events for dads and grandparents.

For children and young people

CLAPA.com/CYP

- Camp CLAPA activity weekends.
- Annual Cleft Youth magazine, filled with inspiring stories, activities, and advice.
- Online events to help young people make friends, share stories, and build their confidence.
- Cleft++ Mentoring, providing one-to-one support for young people.
- CLAPA Companions pen pal scheme, connecting young people in the UK, aged six to 17, through letters, emails, videos, and audio messages.
- Children and Young People's Council (CYPC) - to make sure we're doing everything we can to support our young cleft community.

For adults born with a cleft

CLAPA.com/Adults

- Returning to Treatment information pack.
- Information on all aspects of cleft treatment and support available for adults, informed by the cleft community.
- Adult Peer Support Service, providing one-to-one advice and support.
- Online counselling.
- Online events on topics, including returning to treatment and orthodontics.
- Annual in-person Adults Connected by Cleft event in venues around the UK.
- Adults' Facebook support group, with 2k+ UK adults sharing experiences and advice.

CLAPA Connect

CLAPA.com/Community

We have services and opportunities across the UK, for all people affected by cleft.

Sign up to receive email alerts about events and opportunities relevant to you, as well as our regular CLAPA Connect e-newsletter, packed with stories and updates from the UK cleft community.

Online events

CLAPA.com/Events

CLAPA hosts online events every week to help people born with a cleft, and their families, connect with each other, share experiences, and learn something new.

From informal support groups on particular topics, to multi-session workshops on skills such as baby signing, we have something for everyone!

Our free online events are an easy, no-pressure way to find your cleft community.