We would like to invite you and a friend to participate in a study of babies’ first friendships. This would take up about an hour of your time, and would involve a visit to a specially designed ‘sitting room’ in the School of Psychology building on Park Place, in downtown Cardiff. We can arrange parking or pay your bus or taxi fare.

What we would like you to do is to pretend that you and your friend are getting together with your babies in one of your homes. We have designed a room in our building that resembles an ordinary baby-proof living room, where we can study infant development in a comfortable, familiar setting. Toys will be provided for the babies to play with, and you can keep a copy of the video record that we make as a memento.
This study is part of a long-term programme of work on early development that Professor Hay has conducted in London, Cambridge, Canada, and the United States. We have studied one- and two-year-old children with their brothers and sisters, and their friends, and have found that toddlers are well able to relate to other children. Some of our findings have been surprising; for example, in a study of London toddlers, we found that one- and two-year-olds were more likely to share toys with their friends than to try to grab toys away from other children!

Although there are inevitably some disagreements between young children, these are surprisingly uncommon, and often resolved very rapidly by the children themselves. Grabbing toys is very rare, and hitting even rarer. In 20 years of studies with one- and two-year-olds, we have found very few differences between girls and boys.

Now we would like to extend our research to an even younger age. We believe that the ability to play with other children emerges in the last months of the first year of life—when children first begin to crawl, show interest in particular toys, and start to understand how the world works. If we understand more about the normal development of children's friendships, we may be able to devise ways of helping children who find it difficult to make friends, or to get along peacefully with other children. It's important to study children's abilities to make friends from the very beginning, when babies are first meeting other babies informally, long before they are enrolled in playgroups or nursery classes. We hope that you and a friend will be able to help with this important study.

For further details, you may ring Professor Hay at Cardiff University, on 029 20 876503. Alternatively, if you would like us to ring and explain more about the study, please complete one of the postcards and post it into the envelope underneath our poster.

Thank you.