



Parent or carers relationships with their baby

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What is infant mental health?

A capacity for a baby to experience, regulate and express emotions, and to form close and intimate relationships. To be able to explore the environment and learn.

To be able to communicate, to be able to play, and to have a fundamental experience of feeling 'safe enough' as to be able to be themselves authentically, and feel accepted for who they are.

All these capacities develop within a safe lively relationship with a primary caregiver and are essential for development and preventing mental health difficulties for the future.



We Are Family

1001 Critical days - Why does Infant Mental Health matter?



What is Infant Mental Health? Why does it matter?



Infant mental health describes the social and emotional wellbeing and development of children in the earliest years of life.

Sensitive, responsive and trusted relationships are fundamental to infant mental health. Parents and caregivers help babies to learn how to experience, manage and express their emotions, and to feel safe to explore the world.



Although children's futures are not determined by the age of two, severe and persistent problems in early relationships and emotional development can have pervasive and lifelong impacts on a range of outcomes.

Because the first 1001 days are a period of rapid development, early experiences affect not only babies' emotional wellbeing now but also influences how their bodies and brains develop.



It's very important to **promote emotional wellbeing and development** and to provide support to families if they experience difficulties in parent-infant relationships.

Good infant mental health:

- enables young children to **feel safe and secure**, ready to play, explore and learn as they enter early education and school;
- increases the chances of babies **achieving their potential** in later life and **contributing to society and the economy** as adults;
- lays the groundwork for children's ongoing **social and emotional development**, including resilience and adaptability - key competencies that will help them to **thrive**;

Good infant mental health promotes positive outcomes throughout a person's life and influences how they parent their own children.



The First 1001 Days Movement is a group of organisations and professionals working together to campaign about the importance of the emotional wellbeing of babies.

Baby Communication

Seeing

Babies can see from birth but in the early weeks focus more easily on things about 8 inches away from their faces. They love to watch the human face.

Hearing and listening

Babies can hear everything but like the sound of the human voice the best. Talking to babies, even though they may not understand the words, can help with bonding.

Smiling

Babies smile from birth but in the early weeks this is usually a reflex or automatic behaviour.



Babies are amazing!

- They are born ready to interact with their care givers and are ready to form relationships.
- They may be helpless in a lot of ways but also have agency and they have thoughts, feelings and are communicating.
- Parents who struggle with transition to parenthood often focus on their feelings and what has changed for them, but by giving the baby a voice and getting them to think about what it is like for a baby we can support this transition.
- This is asking the parent to be **Mind Minded** and is often a light bulb moment. We also use the terms **Mentalising** and **reflective functioning**. **This is about a capacity to imagine what it might be like for another person (Peter Fonagy).**
- Contingent response is where the parent responds to the behaviour of the child eg the baby cries the parent picks them up and soothes, the baby shows feeding cues the parent responds and feeds.

Babies are
amazing
and.....

- Evoke and communicate very raw, primitive strong feelings and thoughts
- Are completely dependent on the grown-ups around them to receive these feelings and for their physical care
- Most vulnerable stage of life – evoke strong feelings of vulnerability which can lead some parents to feel like the baby themselves
- Messy – fluids from every orifice
- Rapid growth and change



Where does
the
relationship
with baby
start?


Conception

Pregnancy

Birth

The early years

What can get in the way of a good enough parent infant relationship?

- The parent's own difficult early/childhood experience and relationships with their own parents – this includes relational experience as well as traumatic events (physical, sexual and emotional abuse)
 - Previous loss – miscarriage, early loss, loss of parent, loss of partner
 - Mental health difficulties – struggles with own emotional regulation
 - Couple relationship – from a 2 to a 3 – domestic violence
 - Young parents – conflict with adolescence
- 



Ambivalence as normal

- Ambivalence as ordinary experience in any situation – on a continuum
- Can this be acknowledged?

Can we bear to hear and listen to the difficult and disturbing experiences of pregnancy and of being a parent? Especially for those parents who have experienced their own early difficult beginnings, and trauma?

- ‘discomfort is not the same as disease’ – Alexandra Sacks
- Matrascence – a stage of transition and development

**AMBIVALENT?
WELL, YES AND NO.**

The infant voice:

- I'm four months old. My arrival into the world was a bit difficult. Mum was in labour for a long time, and the birth was very scary for her. She was quite poorly afterwards and has been left with some damage. She doesn't leave the house because she is worried about going to the toilet. She has flashbacks and nightmares about being in hospital. She seems very sad and doesn't say much. She doesn't like being left alone with me. Dad told her not to say anything to the health visitor because he was worried they would take me away. Can anyone help

The infant voice - Scottish policy

- **Space** – Provide Safe, Inclusive opportunities linked into
- **Voice** – Facilitation required to help express their views
- **Influence** – Views must be acted upon, as appropriate
- **Audience** – Views must be listened to
- **Space** and **Voice** relate to the infant's right to express their views.
- **Audience** and **Influence** relate to their right to have their views given due weight.

Start the conversation...

What is the best thing about your relationship with your baby?

What is your biggest fear about your relationship with your baby?

What three words or phrases would you choose to describe your relationship with your baby?





Growing Little Minds

Calderdale Parent Infant Relationship Team

Calderdale's Parent infant relationships team work with families throughout pregnancy and until age 2 years old.

We are now operational and offer:

- Specialist clinical support for parents/ main carers and their relationship with their baby.
- Reflective practice support for practitioners
- Consultation
- Training

You can contact the team for advice and case discussions on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 3pm – 4.30pm
Lynne Sweeney **07763542172** or Angela Ladocha **07763545237** or email growinglittleminds@locala.org.uk



Welcome to the Calderdale PAIRS – Growing little minds

- Angela Ladocha - Project Lead
- Lynne Sweeny - Specialist Health Visitor
- Jane Turner & Joanne Higgins - Consultant Parent infant Psychotherapists
- Layla Amiri - Specialist Neonatal outreach practitioner
- Matt Elliott - Dad Matters Coordinator
- Lisa Delaney – PHEs Clinical lead PNMH
- Lauren Puckering – clinical admin support

Some of the team members will be offering specialist interventions and others will support our referral pathway

What do we offer:



CONSULTATION



TRAINING/CPD
REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION



DIRECT CLINICAL WORK



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
(ALONGSIDE PUBLIC
HEALTH)



Specialist clinical Parent infant relationship interventions

Direct clinical intervention will usually be offered where it is identified following a Consultation from the team. These are some of the interventions to be offered:

- Parent infant Psychotherapy (PIP)
- Video Interactional guidance (VIG)
- Newborn Behavioural Observation (NBO)
- Circle of Security



Growing Little Minds Referrals



Task the team on S1



Email

growinglittleminds@locala.org.uk



Contact Angela Ladocha
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Any Questions?

