

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA/MA

Infant Mental Health: Early Years Development

**TRAINING
PROGRAMMES**

OCTOBER 2011



Ref. M9

This is a part-time two year course for professionals working with infants or pre-school age children and their families, in 'Health' or 'Children, Schools and Families' settings.

It offers an experiential and theoretical approach to understanding children's emotional, social and cognitive development.

There is a strong emphasis on the development of observational skills and their application to the work context, with a significant academic component.

The Diploma in Infant Mental can be completed in two years, the MA degree in two years and two terms.

This course is suitable for:

all early years' professionals including: health visitors, nurses, midwives, nursery heads and staff, social workers, Family Centre staff, clinical psychologists, GP's, paediatricians, nursery and reception teachers.

Aims

This course aims to help professionals:

- gain an increased understanding of the factors which promote healthy emotional development in infants, pre-school age children and their families
- develop an understanding of the psychological problems which can affect this group
- enhance professionals' observational and therapeutic skills

This course aims to increase your understanding of:

- The developing relationships of infants and children within the family context
- The emotional and behavioural problems which can affect this age group
- The factors which promote healthy emotional development of infants and children
- Infant and child observation - tuning in to the baby's signals
- Understanding infant and young children's behaviour, play and communications - early identification and assessment of difficulties
- Developing a therapeutic approach to work with parents, infants and young children including: group, individual and family interventions
- Responding to families where problems include:
 - attachment and parent - infant relationship difficulties
 - post-natal depression - clinginess and separation anxiety
 - feeding and sleep difficulties - tantrums and disruptive behaviour
 - communication and developmental delay in young children

A range of theoretical models, modes of intervention and methods of research is introduced and the focus is on helping students to integrate their expanding understanding of theoretical concepts into their professional practice. The course should not only enable students to become more effective in their own therapeutic work and in their capacity to communicate with colleagues, but where appropriate, to become teachers of students of their own profession. Many professionals recently employed in the SURESTART initiative have found this course invaluable in supporting their approach to the emotional needs of the under fours and their families. Students who complete this course will be eligible to apply for the Tavistock Clinic training in child psychotherapy, should they wish to do so.

Course structure

The first two years (three terms per year) include observational, experiential and theoretical modules, leading to the Diploma. Students may then register for an additional two terms, in order to complete the dissertation leading to an MA.

Year 1 (Course modules)

- i Infant Observation (weekly)
- ii Work Discussion (weekly)
- iii Theoretical Overview (1) fortnightly
- iv Child Development Research (fortnightly)

Year 2 (Course modules)

- i Infant Observation (continued, weekly)
- ii Work Discussion (continued, weekly)
- iii Theoretical Overview (2) (continued, fortnightly)
- iv Special Interest Observation (weekly)

Year 3 (2 terms)

- i Dissertation Supervision Seminar weekly, in term one
- ii Individual Supervision in term two before submission of the dissertation.

Teaching Events

a. Infant Observation Seminar (weekly, two years)

This seminar, together with the Special Interest Observation seminar, more than any other, is helpful in training students to become receptive observers. Each student is required to visit, for an hour a week, a baby growing up with its parents from birth onwards over a period of two years. As this is purely an observational and not a work situation there is no obligation to do anything. Indeed one has to learn to refrain from advice, action, active questioning and investigation and to take up a background stance of friendly attentiveness, which will allow the parents and any other member of the family who may be present to follow their usual routine, with as little interference as possible. There is a wide variety of possibilities for observation within and across cultures from which students and staff learn directly about difference and about the wide variety of shared experience of ordinary development.

Observations are recorded in detail after each visit, typed and presented for discussion in a small seminar group. In this way, each member has the opportunity to follow over the two years the early development of a small number of babies. For most people, other than mothers, the movements of a young infant are fairly unintelligible except in more generalised behavioural terms. One has to allow oneself to come close to the baby in order to notice details and to remember them until some kind of significant pattern seems to emerge.

Because any responsibility for intervention in the growth of this relationship is precluded, the student has the opportunity of observing how a mother/infant couple (sometimes the whole family) live through crises and difficulties as best they can. Each member of the seminar has the opportunity to note at some time or another the difficulty we all have in struggling with states of mind which look for somewhere to put the blame, when things appear to be going wrong, in refraining from 'knowing better' ourselves, and drawing hasty conclusions which may obscure further observations.

As this study and the seminar proceed, members usually begin to realise, in a way that is probably impossible to visualise beforehand, the relevance which infant observation has to work with children and adults, in helping them to recognise the persistence of infantile patterns of behaviour in later life.

b. Work Discussion Seminars (weekly, two years)

All students are undertaking professional work with infants, pre-school age children and their parents. This work commitment may be full or part-time, but must be on a long-term basis and provide opportunities for the worker to develop ongoing relationships with those for whom they have some professional responsibility. The Work Discussion Seminar focuses on detailed observation of the behaviour and emotional responses of worker and clients. In this respect the observational stance is carried over into the study of professional interactions.

Students bring detailed studies of their work for discussion in seminars. The studies presented include the interaction between the students themselves and their charges and in many cases pose questions about their role with colleagues in the organisation within which they are working. The presentation is then discussed by the rest of the group led by a mental health professional experienced in work with infants and pre-school age children.

The task of the seminar is to extend the worker's frame of reference and understanding, so that interventions can be based on a fuller appreciation of the emotional factors at work in relationships. The seminar may address personal factors in the individuals concerned, if relevant to the work, as well as group and institutional processes in the work setting. The seminars have approximately five members and one seminar leader, allowing for close involvement and evolving understanding of the varied professional contexts of the students.

c. Theoretical Overview (fortnightly, two years)

This Unit aims to introduce students to basic theoretical concepts and significant clinical findings, from a range of different theoretical perspectives, which will improve their ability to conceptualise and to practise their professional work. It also provides an appraisal of research methods so that students can evaluate research studies. This two-year module begins with an introduction to a basic psychodynamic model for understanding parent-infant relationships, and explores the contributions of Freud, Klein, Winnicott, and Bion. It moves on to study the findings of attachment theory. These different theoretical models are brought together as we consider a range of different approaches to parent-infant psychotherapy.

Following on from this we consider the significance of the social context in which these relationships take place, including seminars on cultural and ethnic issues, the role of the father, as well as the institutional context in which professionals practise. Further reading follows the course of normal and pathological infant development through key clinical areas of pregnancy, childbirth, feeding, sleeping and crying, moving on to a consideration of the potentially detrimental effects of trauma, abuse, illness and disability. Many of the recommended readings on these topics touch on early intervention methods, giving consideration to both psychoanalytic and alternative therapeutic approaches to work with this client group.

d. Introduction to Child Development Research (fortnightly, one year)

This is a one year teaching event. The reading covers recent research in the field of Child Development with an introduction to its historical, cultural and biological context. Many of the central issues of the course, such as the nature-nurture controversy, the child's adaptation to the environment and the nature of the environment with regard to personal relationships, society and culture are considered. A seminar on neurosciences research is included. Students are also encouraged to make use of their own experience and observations and their relevance to the findings of research. The seminars take the form of group discussions in which students are invited to think about the meaning of what they have read with regard to context, theoretical assumptions and clinical implications. The format is varied to include lectures and audio-visual material.

Teaching events: Second Year

a. Special Interest Observation Seminar (weekly, 1 year)

Students are asked to observe for one year on a regular weekly basis in a setting of relevance to the subject of the course. The aim is not to be prescriptive but to allow students to set up an observation according to their own interests or expertise. This observation might take place in settings such as a day nursery, a special care baby unit, a psychiatric mother and baby unit, a paediatric hospital ward. The appropriateness of the observational setting will be discussed with the seminar leader, and relevant background reading will be suggested as appropriate to the setting. The student's role remains that of an observer and it would not be appropriate for these observations to be carried out in the student's own work place although, for example, a nurse in special care might observe in another unit. The aim of the seminar is to sharpen the student's observational skills and give some first hand knowledge of the situations and experiences that infants and their parents may have encountered. The variety of observation settings contributed by different students will widen the knowledge of all five seminar members.

b. Infant Observation and Work Discussion Seminars (weekly)

These continue as for the first year.

c. Theoretical Overview (fortnightly)

The second year expands on the theoretical concepts studies in year 1, and considers their application to specific problem areas, eg bereavement, post-natal depression and premature babies.

d. Seminar on Personality Development (optional, in London only, fortnightly)

This seminar attempts to explore links between the development of the child in the family and in a number of therapeutic interactions. Attention is given to the significance of 'transference' and 'countertransference' in these relationships. Some attention is given to the ways in which anti-developmental trends can become established and to the part which they play in the development of character.

Written Requirements

Keeping records of observations and work experience, readings and preparing material for seminars, is a commitment of 9-10 hours per week. Students are required to present written accounts of their infant observation, work experience, and a brief summary of the main themes which emerged in their special interest observation. An essay on a topic derived from the Theoretical Overview seminar is required at the end of the first and second years. An essay is required to be submitted for the Child Development Research module at the end of the first year. (Some basic word processing and computer skills would be helpful).

Tutorial arrangements

Each student has a personal tutor, who together with the Course Tutors, is available to discuss problems connected with the course.

Membership

The course is open to those with a professional qualification enabling them to work with children from 0-5 years of age and with their parents or carers. Students are expected to be working in a professional context which enables them to bring appropriate examples and concerns for discussion. The Tavistock Clinic does not take any responsibility for finding work for students or for the management or supervision of their work.

Method of selection

Students are accepted on the basis of references, work experience and aspirations which are discussed at a personal interview.

Seminar times

Year 1: Day release on Wednesdays from 10.00 - 3.15pm
Year 2: Day release on Wednesdays from 10.00 - 4.45pm.
In addition, observation, recording, reading and essay writing may take some 9-10 hours per week in both years.

Organising tutors

Louise Emanuel, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist (London)

Paul Barrows, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist (Bristol)

Staff team

Dilys Daws
Juliet Hopkins
Graham Music
Asha Phillips
Christine Porter
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Sara Rance

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