

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA/MA

# Early Years Development: Infant Mental Health

**TRAINING  
PROGRAMMES**

OCTOBER 2010

*This course is delivered in Bristol at  
the North Bristol NHS Trust*

Ref. M9K



The course is run jointly by the Tavistock Clinic, North Bristol NHS Trust and the University of East London.

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

The course can be taken on a modular basis, taking a maximum of four years to complete to Diploma level with another two terms to complete the MA dissertation.

### **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

The course seeks to extend and deepen the understanding of human development and relationships. There is a strong emphasis on the development of observational skills and their application to the work context, with a significant academic component.

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 academic years (three terms per year) comprise 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 studied in year 1, and considers their application to specific problem areas, eg bereavement, post-natal depression, premature babies.

### 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 (5000 words each) of their infant observation, work experience, and a brief summary (3500 words) of the main themes which emerged in their special interest observation. One long essay (4000 words) on a topic derived from the Theoretical Overview seminar is required towards the end of the second year. One essay (3500 - 4000 words) 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 to five 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. UH Bristol 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 Fridays

**Year 2** - day release on Fridays

In addition, observation, recording, reading and essay writing may take some 9-10 hours per week in both years.

### Subject access

As a condition of enrolment, all students on this course are required to apply to their local police station to obtain 'subject access' under the Data Protection Act (1998). This process involves completing a form and providing proof of identity showing your full name, date of birth and current address. Original documents must be provided. A reply from the National Identification Service should be expected within 40 days. You can check the fee at the following website: [www.met.police.uk/dataprotection/](http://www.met.police.uk/dataprotection/)

### Organising tutors

Louise Emanuel, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist (London)

Paul Barrows, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist (Bristol)

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

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