

Babies in Our Minds: working therapeutically with parents and infants to promote secure attachment and parental mentalization



*“Conversations in our MDT meetings are very different now that members of the team have completed the **Babies In Our Minds** training. There is an energy and a shared understanding between the team which everyone can feel a part of. Team members who have struggled to adjust from working with adults in CMHTs have demonstrated that their thinking has shifted to include **focusing on the baby's needs**. The team therefore feels more cohesive with a shared **vision**.”* Mandy Raywood, Specialist Perinatal Service Manager, Cornwall, 2020

Overview

Babies in Our Minds (BIOM) is a modular, 2-3 day training, for practitioners working in the early years and in perinatal teams.

*Module 1: **Infant brain development + observation/recording skills***

*Module 2: **Attachment** - the importance of positive early relationships, and how we can promote secure attachment*

*Module 3: **Watching and waiting** - promoting parental attunement through infant-led play*

*Module 4: Developing skills in **reflective practice and structuring parent-infant interventions***

BIOM contributes to **more effective assessment, safeguarding and therapeutic intervention** with parents and infants.

What is different about BIOM?

Training courses generally consist of a sequence of presentations on core aspects of infant mental health. *BIOM* also offers this – but more: in-depth group discussion of key concepts, with examples linking theory to practice; guidance on **detailed observation** of parent-infant interaction; **reflective practice where practitioners bring their cases for discussion**; thereby developing **confidence** in their practice and their **ability to put the parent-infant relationship at the centre of their work**.

See practitioner feedback below.

Knowledge and understanding

BIOM increases practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the **impact of the family environment** (caregivers' capacity for mentalization, attunement and sensitivity) on the social, emotional and cognitive **development of infants**, and their ongoing emotional wellbeing through life.

BIOM explores **intergenerational transmission**: what parents bring to their parenting of infants, from their own childhood experiences of being parented, and the impact of their own past trauma and unresolved difficulties on their bond with their infant.

Detailed reference lists are provided, including references for academic journal articles, books and websites, to support self-directed learning.

Skill development

BIOM emphasises the importance of **detailed observation, reflection and analysis**. Practitioners bring their **own case examples** and observations for in-depth discussion, applying theory to practice.

BIOM supports the development of **essential skills in assessment** of the parent-infant relationship, the **emotional needs of the infant**, and delivery of therapeutic parent-infant **interventions**.

BIOM supports skills identified in the Association for Infant Mental Health (AIMH) UK ***Infant Mental Health Competency Framework and Perinatal Mental Health Competency Framework***. *BIOM* is recognised by the AiMH UK [*Infant Mental Health Recognition Register*](#).

Safeguarding

Safeguarding relies on an understanding of the **complexity** of the parent-infant relationship, an **informed assessment** of this relationship, and an ability to **communicate effectively with the network**.

BIOM supports development of knowledge and skills essential to safeguarding.

Learning outcomes

- Understanding of **theoretical concepts in infant's social and emotional development, and parent-infant relationships**, including:
 - psychobiological brain development
 - emotional regulation
 - attachment security/insecurity & intergenerational transmission
 - parental mentalization, attunement and sensitivity
 - resilience
- **Application of theoretical concepts** to work with infants and their parents, including understanding the **infant's communication through behaviour and play**
- **Essential skills in detailed observation** and recording of infant behaviour and parent-infant interaction
- Essential skills in **building robust therapeutic relationships with parents**, to enable them to support their infant's emotional development and secure attachment
- More thorough **assessment** of emotional needs of parent and infant, and what the parent may be bringing to parenting from their own history (intergenerational transmission)
- **Reduced risk and better safeguarding**, and more **effective communication** with the professional network.

Pre-requisites

Practitioners need to have experience of working with infants, young children and their families in a professional capacity.

BIOM is suitable for practitioners at Levels 1-3 of the AiMH UK IMH Competency Framework.

The learning outcomes depend on the level of expertise and skill of the practitioner at the start of the training. Participants access the training at their level, and develop accordingly.

Delivery methods

Learning is through a combination of the following.

1. **Comprehensive PowerPoint presentations** (theory and research)
2. **Microanalysis of parent-infant interaction** (audio-visual recordings)
3. **Trainer case examples** for detailed study
4. **Reflective practice** (practitioners bring own case examples for discussion; encouraged to include a detailed observation using *BIOM* Guidelines)
5. **Reflections** on learning, reading, Q & A

Course structure

Module 1: Infant brain development + observation/recording skills

- How early relationships impact on the structure of the infant's brain & long-term
- The impact of neglect and trauma on brain development and behaviour (parent and infant)
- Techniques for detailed observation and recording of infant behaviour and parent-infant interaction - why observe closely?

Module 2: Attachment - the importance of positive early relationships, and how we can promote secure attachment

- Why do infants and children behave as they do?
- What is the impact of early life experience?
- What impact do parents have on the infant's social and emotional development?
- What is parental mentalization, attunement, and emotional regulation of the infant?
- How can we support parents to understand and attune to their infants?

Module 3: Watching and waiting – promoting parental attunement through infant-led play

- Understanding the principles of the well-established therapeutic intervention *Watch, Wait and Wonder* (Muir 1992), the universal adaptation developed by Dr Zilibowitz in Australia, and the development of the Tavistock Clinic approach: *Watch Me Play!* (2020)
- How infant-led play can enhance parental sensitivity, attunement and bonding, and promote a more secure attachment in the infant
- Skills to use infant-led play in practitioners' own settings: all perinatal practitioners, whatever their role, can use this approach

Module 4: Developing skills in reflective practice and structuring parent-infant interventions

- Further application of theory to practice: practitioner cases, using observation skills learned from Module 1
- Using genograms to highlight intergenerational transmission
- How to structure your parent-infant intervention? (Some key steps.)
- Working with colleagues to assess, and reach a coherent narrative (co-constructed with the client) to inform intervention

Note:

Modules 1-3 are standalone.

Module 4 follows on from delivery of Modules 1& 2, and preferably after Module 3.

Modules can be delivered consecutively, or with a gap in-between (see Course Delivery below).

Background to Babies in Our Minds

BIOM was created, and is delivered, by Rachel Pardoe (Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist) who has over 27 years' experience of working in the NHS in CAMHS and perinatal services. Rachel has provided training to staff in the NHS, education and social care, since 2000.

BIOM has been delivered to over 80 NHS perinatal staff in the South West of England, and in 2021 Module 2 (Attachment) was delivered online to 170 NHS and early years practitioners in South Wales. *BIOM* has received highly positive feedback. **Evaluation reports** are available on request.

Other training delivered by EarlyYES:

2015-ongoing: EarlyYES *Who Am I?* 5-day course delivered to 110 practitioners in Wales and Swindon (including health visitors, midwives, social workers, family workers, youth workers, CAMHS mental health practitioners, and voluntary sector family worker staff).

2011-2016: 5-day training delivered within a Bristol NHS Trust to over 180 health visitors and early years practitioners.

Practitioner feedback

Practitioner feedback over many years demonstrates that **EarlyYES training contributes significantly to workforce development, enabling practitioners to access up-to-date knowledge and skills.**

Feedback on *BIOM* from perinatal staff:

*BIOM training has **completely changed my way of thinking about how people's histories play such a significant role in their own parenting styles.** I also feel that my knowledge base has **significantly expanded** and I am able to provide a better service to the individuals I work with.*

*The two days have been **incredibly helpful in upskilling and will definitely impact on my day to day work** with families. (Mental Health Nurse)*

*I enjoyed the course and found it very useful. I have since been able to be **much more reflective during my observations of parent-infant interactions** and have been able to write **more comprehensive assessments** regarding observations of attachment.*

*There were many useful points and **although I have learned about attachment before, today it made more sense.** The teaching was at the right pace and kept my interest throughout – thank you. I will be taking a lot from it! (Mental Health Nurse)*

***Focus on the baby** – with years as an adult Mental Health professional, it's been great to be able to view the baby holistically in the sessions. I value the shared discussion and found reading lists very helpful to guide learning. (Occupational Therapist)*

*Revisiting theory of attachment, and then **directly applying the theory to our role/service** – **made even richer with the case studies.** (Mental Health Nurse)*

*Helpful to think about recording observations of parent/infant interactions in an accurate and helpful way. **Voice of the child** to be used in all interventions/contacts. (Mental Health Nurse)*

*I found the **techniques for recording observations** very helpful to record the voice of the child – feel more confident on how to record my observations. (Perinatal MH Worker)*

*The **language** used when talking to parents and documenting these engagements is so important, and I feel like these sessions **have supported my use of terminology more positively and appropriately.***

***All of it useful!** Focus on infant observation. Neuropsychology stuff. (Perinatal Clinical Psychologist)*

***Very experienced trainer.** Increased my knowledge and understanding around the importance of early brain development. Excellent training. (Senior FSW, Specialist Pre-Birth Service)*

Excellent use of DVD examples – thank you for showing us what happens when it doesn't go well. (Perinatal MH Worker)

I have thoroughly enjoyed the course, it has been very interactive, despite being online, and extremely stimulating and thought provoking. The skills and knowledge I have learned with inevitably impact on my practice alongside further reading from the **extensive reading list** provided. I would like to take the opportunity to **thank Rachel for her commitment, compassion and enthusiasm for having 'babies in our minds' in the delivery of the course.**

*Good discussions throughout and caseloads we went through. **My knowledge has definitely improved and would highly recommend this course.***

Course delivery

Babies In Our Minds is designed as a modular training, which can be delivered as required by commissioners for their staff.

Modules 1-3 are standalone.

Module 4 follows on from delivery of Modules 1& 2, and preferably after Module 3.

Modules can be delivered consecutively, or with a gap in-between to allow time for reflection and application of learning.

Minimum number of practitioners per module: **10**

Recommended **maximum** number of practitioners for each module: **15** to allow time and space for discussion.

Larger numbers can be accommodated (BIOM Module 2 – *Attachment* - has been delivered online to a cohort of over 50 practitioners).

BIOM is delivered **online** using Zoom.

Face to face delivery may be available if commissioned as follows:

- minimum 3 BIOM modules
- minimum 12 practitioners per module
- travel expenses and overnight accommodation (if required) to be added.

Course fees

The course fees below apply to cohorts of a minimum of 10 practitioners.

BIOM Module	Duration	Fee per person per module
Module 1	Full day: 7 hours	£120
Module 2	Full day: 7 hours	£120
Module 3	Half day: 3.5 hours	£70
Module 4 (follows 1, 2 & preferably 3)	Half day: 3.5 hours	£70

Course Organiser and Trainer: Rachel Pardoe



- [Early Years Emotional Security website](#)
- [LinkedIn profile](#)
- Director & Lead Trainer, EarlyYES Limited
- Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist
- Parent-infant Psychotherapist
- Full Member of the Association of Child Psychotherapists
- Accredited Video Interaction Guidance Practitioner & Supervisor

Rachel graduated from the University of Sussex in 1982 with a First Class BA Honours in Social Psychology. She worked as a Residential Social Worker in two specialist schools before training as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic, qualifying in 1996. She is a Full Member of the Association of Child Psychotherapists.

Rachel worked within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (**CAMHS**) from 1991-2018. From 2018-2019, she set up the **Parent-Infant service within the Specialist Community Perinatal Service in Bristol**. She has extensive experience of working therapeutically with infants, children and adolescents, and their families. Rachel has particular expertise in working with the complexities of parent-infant relationships, attachment difficulties, the intergenerational impact of trauma, and the impact of neglect and abuse on the child.

Since qualifying as a Child Psychotherapist, Rachel has supervised clinicians working in a variety of contexts both, within and outside the NHS. Rachel is Director of **Early Years Emotional Security (EarlyYES) Limited**, offering clinical supervision, consultation, and training in infant/children's mental health to professionals in Health, Social Care, Early Years and schools.

Rachel qualified in **Video Interaction Guidance (VIG)** in 2016, pioneering the use of VIG in Bristol CAMHS. She accredited as a **VIG Supervisor** in 2017. Rachel currently supervises clinicians working in a range of services, including NHS Trusts, local authority services, and the third sector. She offers VIG therapeutic work to families with infants and young children.

Rachel taught for many years on the Tavistock Clinic/University of Essex postgraduate programme, and the International Training School for Infancy and Early Years (ITSIEY). Rachel continues to teach on the University of Bath clinical psychology doctorate programme.

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