

## Session Plan

Session	Infant Mental Health
<b>Background Information</b>	<p>Everyone has mental health, including babies and infants, however infant mental health is often an overlooked and misunderstood topic. The mental health of babies and young children is important now, and critical for their future health and development.</p> <p>From the moment babies are born the interactions we have with them are so important for their brain development. From birth to three years old, a child's brain develops rapidly and it represents a crucial time for a child's social, emotional and cognitive development. Research shows a strong connection between exposure to stress in pregnancy and early life, and later mental ill-health. By identifying the potential for poor mental health at an early age, interventions can be introduced that can help lay strong foundations to improve the social, emotional and physical outcomes for children.</p>
<b>Aim</b>	To raise awareness of Infant Mental Health
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<p>Participants will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Dispel some of the myths around infant mental health</li><li>2. Describe what infant mental health is</li><li>3. Discuss what can affect Infant Mental Health</li><li>4. Discuss how poor mental health can impact on infants' social and emotional development</li><li>5. Discuss what to look out for</li><li>6. Discuss what can be done to protect, support and promote Infant Mental Health</li><li>7. Access resources to support infant mental health</li></ol>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1.5 hours</li></ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IT</li><li>• Quiz</li><li>• Presentation</li><li>• Flipchart/pens</li><li>• Session handouts</li><li>• Evaluation</li></ul>

Learning outcomes	Participant Activity	Resources	Time
1. Dispel some of the myths around Infant Mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myth buster</li> </ul>	Quiz	10 min
2. Describe what Infant Mental Health is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Infant Mental Health?</li> </ul>	Flipchart/Pens Slide	10 min
3. Discuss what can affect Infant Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can affect IMH?</li> </ul>	Flipchart/Pens Slide	10 min
4. Discuss how poor mental health can impact on infants' social and emotional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the impact of poor mental health on the infant?</li> </ul>	Flipchart/Pens Slide	15 min
5. Discuss what to look out for in the infant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What to look out for</li> </ul>	Flipchart/Pens Slide	20 min
6. Discuss what can be done to protect, support and promote Infant Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports</li> </ul>	Flipchart/Pens Slide	15 min
7. Looking after our own mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-care activity</li> </ul>	Slide	5 min
8. Evaluation and session close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation</li> </ul>	Evaluation	5 min

# Infant Mental Health

## Facilitator notes

Slide	Notes	Time	Resources
1	Welcome participants and introduce yourself before offering an overview of the session. Have the title slide up whilst doing this.	5 min	Slides
2	<p>Put up the session overview slide and read out what will be covered today.</p> <p>Please note that the term 'infant' refers to babies and very young children aged 0-3. The first 1,001 critical days are a unique period for a baby that sets the foundations for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing.</p> <p><b>Delivering to Parents/Carers</b></p> <p>*Be mindful if delivering this session to parents/carers that they are not left feeling “blamed” for some of the factors that can impact on Infant Mental Health. This can inadvertently result in them feeling they have failed as a parent(s) and reinforce feelings of guilt. Factors can often be out with the control of the parents/carers. Parents and carers want to do the best for their child but often find the path is not straightforward and finding support and useful information can be challenging and overwhelming. The session is to help raise awareness of some of the factors but ultimately explore ways in which we can support and protect infant mental health*.</p> <p><b>Keeping safe</b></p> <p>Reinforce this is a basic awareness session and does not allow for detailed discussion. If you are concerned about a participant’s mental health and wellbeing and feel they may be in distress, their Doctor should be their first point of contact. If you feel the person’s life is in immediate danger please call 999 for assistance.</p> <p><b>Online delivery</b></p> <p>Please refer to the <a href="#">Healthy Minds Online Guidance</a> if you are facilitating a session online.</p>		
Activity	<p><b>Dispelling the myths: Quiz</b></p> <p><b>Individual or Group Activity</b></p>	<p>10 min</p> <p>(5 min activity, 5</p>	Quiz

	<p>Let's start with exploring some of the myths about infant mental health.</p> <p>Distribute the quiz to participants. This can be done on an individual basis or as a group. Ask participants to complete the quiz, true or false. This is a good starting point and gives an insight into the participant's knowledge and attitudes on infant mental health.</p> <p>Once completed, go through each of the questions of the quiz to generate discussion. Use the supporting statements to provide the correct answers and information.</p> <p><b>Discussion point:</b> Were there any surprises? Share the activity is a good starting point to help challenge some of the myths associated with infant mental health.</p> <p>Summarise by saying everyone has mental health, including infants, however infant mental health is often an overlooked and misunderstood topic. If we can identify the potential for poor mental health at an early age, interventions can be introduced that can help lay strong foundations to improve the social, emotional and physical outcomes for children.</p>	min feedback)	
<b>Activity &amp; 3</b>	<p><b>What is Infant Mental health?</b></p> <p><b>Group Activity</b></p> <p>Divide the participants into groups, provide flipchart and pens. Now we are going to explore what we mean by infant mental health. How would be describe/define it, what is your understanding of infant mental health?</p> <p>Invite the groups to discuss what their understanding of infant mental health is, what words do they associate with it. Ask them to write down the key points from their discussions. Take feedback from the groups.</p> <p>Put up the slide what is "Infant Mental Health" up and read out the information, make reference to any similarities the groups have identified.</p> <p>Summarise by saying the early years of an infant's life are important for their life outcomes. The first three years represent a crucial time for</p>	10 min (5 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Slide Flipchart Pens

	<p>an infant's social, emotional and cognitive development. Simply put when we talk about infant mental health we mean how well an infant develops emotionally and socially during the first three years of life. Remind participants that it is never too late to build a secure attachment/relationship and or too late to turn things around. This session focuses solely on Infant Mental Health.</p> <p><b>Discussion point:</b> how did they find this exercise? As mentioned, Infant Mental Health is often overlooked and misunderstood. Too often mental health is discussed without any reference to infant mental health. Considering the infant mental needs of babies is important as they deserve the best start in life. It is essential in allowing them to achieve, participate and thrive in all aspects of life.</p>		
4	<p><b>Statistics</b></p> <p>The purpose of this section is give an insight into some of statistics relating to infant mental health and why the case to support protect and promote infant mental health is important.</p> <p>Inform the participants we are going to look at some statistics relating infant mental health. Read the information off the slide.</p> <p><b>*Adverse Childhood Experiences</b> are stressful or traumatic experiences that can greatly impact children and young people throughout their lives. This can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exposure to domestic violence, growing up in a household with substance use, mental illness, imprisonment</p> <p><b>Discussion point:</b> once you have read off the information, ask the participants what their thoughts and views are on the statistics, are they alarmed by them, or did they expect worse? Again highlight why the statistics reflect the need to protect, promote and support infant mental health to ensure all infants achieve, participate and thrive in all aspects of life.</p>	5 min	Slide
Activity & 5	<p><b>What can affect Infant Mental Health?</b></p> <p><b>Group Activity</b></p>	<p>10 min</p> <p>(5 min activity, 5</p>	Slide

	<p>Divide the participants into groups, provide flipchart. Put up slide 5 and ask the groups to consider some things that can negatively affect an infant's mental health under each of the three headings on the slide.</p> <p>Take feedback from the groups one/two examples from each.</p> <p><b>Caregiver and Family Factors</b>  The emotional well-being of infants is directly tied to the functioning of their caregivers and the families in which they live. Good quality infant–parent/caregiver relationships provides the strongest protective effects for infant mental health and is the strongest predictor of mental health outcomes. If parents/caregivers fail to provide this it can lead to social and emotional health problems.</p> <p>Other risk factors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mother's physical and mental health during pregnancy</li> <li>• Basic human survival needs not being met; adequate nutrition, warmth, hygiene, secure attachment, touch, skin to skin contact, nurture</li> <li>• Substance use</li> <li>• Financial Hardship</li> <li>• Involvement in the criminal justice system,</li> <li>• Domestic abuse</li> <li>• Parental conflict</li> <li>• Seeking refuge</li> <li>• Cultural (can influence some parenting practices and, in turn, infant mental health)</li> </ul> <p><b>Infant factors</b>  These are individual factors that negatively influence infant mental health and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth complications</li> <li>• Pre-term delivery</li> <li>• Low birth weight</li> <li>• Injury</li> <li>• Infection</li> <li>• Exposure to adverse experiences (trauma, alcohol/drugs)</li> </ul>	min feedback)	
--	---	---------------	--

	<p><b>Community, social and physical environment factors</b></p> <p>Wider community, social and physical environment facts can also influence infant mental health. Examples include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial hardship</li> <li>• Poor housing</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Overcrowding</li> <li>• Criminality</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Access to resources for play and recreation.</li> </ul> <p>These are not exhaustive lists. There are many risk factors that can impact on infant mental health and often do not sit in isolation. It is important to have an awareness of the different factors when considering infant mental health and when it comes to support.</p>		
<b>Activity &amp; 6</b>	<p><b>Impact of poor mental health on the infant</b></p> <p><b>Group Activity</b></p> <p>Keep the participants in their groups or can be done as a whole group as a call out activity.</p> <p>Following on from exploring the risk factors, now we are going to look at the impact poor mental health can have on infant development.</p> <p>Ask them to consider what the impact of having poor mental health may have on the infant.</p> <p>Take feedback from each of the groups.</p> <p>Put up the slide and go through each bullet point. Acknowledge similarities that participants have highlighted in their feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns with meeting developmental milestones and or failing to thrive. These are things like such as rolling over, crawling, and talking. Failing to thrive.</li> <li>• Increased anxiety or challenging behaviours. It can be normal for infants to have tantrums at times, however when some behaviours; yelling, kicking, hitting</li> </ul>	<p>10 min</p> <p>(5 min activity, 5 min feedback)</p>	<p>Slide</p> <p>Flipchart</p> <p>Pens</p>

	<p>etc become more frequent and intense, this could be sign something is going on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily overwhelmed by emotion or showing little expressed emotions. (May not make noises very often, like cooing or babbling sounds).</li> <li>• Struggling to self-soothe or develop capacity to regulate emotions. We aren't born with the ability to self-regulate; this is a behaviour learned from caregivers. If an infant is unable to self-soothe this can lead to an increase in emotional outbursts and social conflicts, they may struggle to focus and listen which in turn may hinder their learning and development.</li> <li>• Capacity to form close, loving, meaningful relationships: poor mental health can affect a child emotionally and psychologically into adulthood, and have an impact on their future relationships.</li> <li>• Capacity to play, learn and achieve / engage in their world: if infants are unable to regulate their emotions they are less likely to feel safe to explore, make friends, learn and engage in their world.</li> </ul> <p>This is not an exhaustive list, however this exercise demonstrates just some of the impacts that poor mental health can have on the social and emotional development of the infant.</p>		
<b>Activity &amp; 7</b>	<p><b>What to look out for?</b></p> <p><b>Group Activity</b></p> <p><b>Keep the participants in their groups.</b></p> <p>Following on from the impact of poor mental health, now we are going to explore and consider what signs to look out for that may be a sign of social or emotional concerns in an infant.</p> <p>Take feedback from each of the groups.</p> <p>Put up the slide and go through each bullet point. Acknowledge similarities that participants have highlighted in their feedback.</p>	<p>15 min</p> <p>(10 min activity, 5 min feedback)</p>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties with separating, sleeping or feeding. Could there be something physical or clinical issue that needs attention?</li> <li>• An infant who excessively cries or is distressed without being able to be comforted. Consider are they in pain, constipated, colic etc?</li> <li>• An infant who is unusually quiet or isn't able to express their needs. Are there neurodevelopmental concerns?</li> <li>• An infant who appears startled or scared. Are there neurodevelopmental concerns?</li> <li>• An infant withdrawing or cutting off from relationships, or engaging in indiscriminate efforts to have needs met by anyone.</li> </ul> <p>Highlight that it can be difficult to know if an infant's behaviour is a result of a mental health problem. These symptoms may be a sign of social or emotional concerns in an infant and more so if these issues are present most of the time and affecting an infant's ability to cope with day-to-day life at home and/or nursery.</p>		
<b>Activity &amp; 8</b>	<p><b>Promoting Infant Mental Health</b></p> <p><b>Group Activity</b></p> <p><b>Keep the participants in their groups.</b></p> <p>We have looked at what infant mental health is, factors that can affect infant mental health, the impact this can have on infants and some of the signs to look out for. This part of the session will explore what we can do to protect, promote and support infant mental health. To do this we need to look at reducing the stressors affecting infant mental health and addressing the stresses on their families.</p> <p>Put participants into groups and invite them to discuss what we can do to promote, protect and support Infant Mental Health. Once completed take feedback from each group, one/two</p>	<p>15 min</p> <p>(10 min activity, 5 min feedback)</p>	<p>Slide</p> <p>Flipchart</p> <p>Pens</p>

	<p>examples from each. Once all groups have fed back, bring the slide up. Make reference to any similarities highlighted by the groups.</p> <p><b>Serve and return</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote serve and return interactions. Think of a game of tennis. This is the responsive back and forth interactions between infants and the people who care for them. Infants have things to tell us. When an infant babbles, gestures, or cries, and an adult responds appropriately with eye contact, words, or a hug, these interactions help infants grow and reach their full potential. Examples of serve and return interactions include: If an infant makes a sound, say something back to them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Attuned relationships that provide safety, security and containment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infants need stable and responsive relationships with caring adults. Attunement is the ability to be aware of and respond to an infant's needs. Containment involves creating a safe space for infants to express emotions and navigate difficulties. Parents/caregivers can use a variety of techniques to increase their level of attunement. This starts with meeting an infant's basic needs for warmth, food, sleep, safety and love. Using a soft gentle voice when interacting with Infants.</li> </ul> <p><b>Wider supports for parents and carers to meet their needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most parents want to do the best for their infant but when they experience stress, particularly in the absence of support, this can make it harder for them to provide infants with the nurturing care they need.</li> <li>Parenting support/programmes.</li> <li>Access to services/supports appropriate to their needs: universal services including midwifery, health visiting.</li> <li>Specialist services including perinatal and infant mental health teams.</li> <li>Financial inclusion support.</li> <li>Community resources, parent groups, buggy walks.</li> </ul>		
--	--	--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital resources, Parent Club provides encouragement and expert advice to parents as well as practical ideas involving storytelling, singing nursery rhymes or talking. Ready Steady Baby has ideas for parents about bonding during pregnancy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Opportunities and experiences to explore and learn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This can include things like playtime. Playtime will look different depending on the age of the infant, but it is also a perfect time to start putting their thoughts into words by describing what they are doing; eg building blocks . Play can involve a child playing alone, alongside another child, or cooperatively with another child, children and or an adult.</li> <li>• Infants are less able than adults to relax when stressed. They need responsive adults to help them self-regulate. Engage in activities to help both the parent/caregiver and infant to relax for example going for walk offers the opportunity to talk to your child and talk about everything you see and hear around you, eg nature.</li> <li>• Exploring activities (age &amp; stage appropriate). Exploring helps to develop curiosity, problem-solving skills, and confidence in infants.</li> <li>• Share stories and read books.</li> <li>• Make and use musical instruments.</li> <li>• Use a variety of materials for sensory play.</li> </ul> <p>Note that resources and supports available will vary across areas.</p> <p>Circulate the Infant Mental Health resources handout. Facilitators can adapt the resources handout to include locality resources and supports.</p> <p>Summarise by sharing that the mental health of infants is important and that if we can identify the potential for poor mental health at an early age, interventions can be introduced that can help lay strong foundations to improve the</p>		
--	---	--	--

	social, emotional and physical outcomes for children.		
<b>Activity &amp; 9</b>	Remind the participants of the importance of looking after their own mental health and provide a self-care activity.	3 min	Slide
<b>Session Close</b>	Thank the participants for their time and ask them to complete an evaluation.	2 min	Evaluation