

**Giving children the best start in life - parents supporting parents – a simple idea that really works!**

**Our army of volunteers are now receiving additional training to help improve bonding and attachment**

Perinatal mental health and infant mental health are inextricably intertwined and impact on each other. There is growing understanding that focusing on the parent alone or infant alone is not enough. Working with infants and parents together, within their relationship, provides the greatest opportunity to strengthen the psychological wellbeing of each. (Gruendel 2014).

*The majority of families with mental health problems present with mild to moderate difficulties and don't meet criteria for specialist services.*

Treating maternal mental health problems like depression can reduce symptoms but will not treat the relationship problems that lead to poorer outcomes for families

*There is a wealth of evidence that problems in the early relationship, often caused by mental health problems, impact on early brain development with lifelong social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural consequences for the infant.*

From birth to 18 months, connections in the brain are created at a rate of one million per second. The earliest experiences shape a baby's brain development and have a lifelong impact on that baby's mental and emotional health.



Based on the Tameside model, driven by Clinical Psychologist Dr Pauline Lee, Home-Start in Trafford and Salford are now delivering an enhanced Home-Start PIMH service called **Baby Bond**, in partnership with clinical leads and the Midwifery at the University of Salford. We are in the second year of a 2 year project funded by the CCGs and Trafford Housing Trust.

HSTS staff team have received additional training and are now delivering PIMH training to our home-visiting volunteers to enhance the support they give to families with a 0-2-year old infant. To gain more knowledge and a better understanding of attachment theory; infant brain development; understanding baby states; and on factors that can impact a parent's ability to form a positive relationship with their child.

In a volunteer's own words this is what she said about what she has learnt, ***"A greater understanding of Parent Infant Bonding, the importance of interaction, and that communication is important - babies don't come with a manual, they are the manual!"***

The practical elements of Home-Start continue, for example accompanying to a play and stay session, or visits to the park. The extra training gives volunteers tips and ideas to sprinkle relationship enhancing things within their normal family support visits.

We have evidence that as a result of this support, parents feel more able to cope, that they can respond better to their baby's needs and that they have more of an understanding of how important they are in their child's development.

At the end of support one mum said, ***"Thank you it has made a difference in my life. I was at a low point and needed social interactions. I was hesitant at first but my volunteer Linzi had valuable information"***.

We asked what she thought her baby would say if he could talk about the support they received, ***"I feel happy when people visit me and play. I feel stressed when I see mummy lost or sad. Mummy needed guidance, she is learning."***