Course Brochure

Children and Young People’s Psychological Trainings (CYP PT)

Infant and Early Years Practitioner (IEYP) training: for the early years’ workforce and the broader children and young people’s mental health community

28 March 2024, Version 1.0

# Introduction

Training remains a pivotal strategy in introducing new evidence-based practices to CYP mental health services. To fulfil the ambitions articulated in the ‘NHS Long Term Plan’ and to harness the advantages of innovative methodologies, there is an imperative to expand capacity, adapt operational tactics, and bridge projected shortfalls while bolstering labour efficiency. Elevating the skill sets of the workforce is crucial. The Infant Early Years Practitioner (IEYP) course not only amplifies core competencies but also unveils avenues to advanced training and registration as a healthcare professional. By broadening entry opportunities into CYP mental health services and offering efficient educational trajectories, we can enhance workforce accessibility and diversification, and concurrently facilitate the progression of trainees. Such a comprehensive approach ensures that educational and training agendas remain seamlessly integrated into operational, strategic, financial and workforce planning.

The IEYP training provides practitioners with a comprehensive skill set to assess, formulate and treat infants and young children and their caregivers who are experiencing common mental health and relationship difficulties, using the latest evidence-based approaches.

The programme includes theoretical teaching and practical, skills-based training in the foundations of practice for the early years, with two pathways that lead to key skills and accreditable practice in evidence-based interventions for infants and young children respectively. Learners on the parent–infant pathway will acquire in-depth knowledge and skills to promote parental sensitivity and infant attachment in vulnerable parents/carers and babies, gaining accreditation in either video feedback intervention to promote positive parenting (VIPP) or Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). They will also acquire in-depth experience of working supportively with parent-infant dyads where a parent has a mental health condition. Learners on the early childhood pathway will acquire in-depth knowledge and skills to deliver evidence-based parenting support to manage emerging anxiety and behavioural problems, gaining accreditation in an evidence-based and recognised model of behavioural management such as Incredible Years. These interventions are recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the Healthy Child Programme.

# Programme aims

The first 5 years are an important time in children’s development because children are in the process of acquiring a range of social, emotional, behavioural, and cognitive abilities that are foundational in terms of their long-term wellbeing. Children’s development during this period is also ‘relational’, in that it is strongly influenced by the caregiving they receive. For example, very young children are highly dependent on their parents/caregivers during the first 5 years of life to help them regulate themselves. Their attachment relationships with primary caregivers are key to the development of such abilities. The type of attachment that a child experiences also influences many other aspects of their development, including their behaviour, peer relationships and learning.[[1]](#endnote-1) Evidence-based methods of working to support children within this age group who are experiencing regulatory, emotional, or behavioural problems are as such dyadic/triadic in nature (that is, targeting the parent/carer(s) and child together), in recognition of the relational nature of many of these problems.

Significant numbers of young children experience regulatory, social, emotional and conduct problems in the first 5 years of life, and it is therefore important that key frontline practitioners (for example, health visitors, children’s centre workers and social care practitioners) have the necessary skills to support children who may be experiencing such difficulties.

The CYP PT curriculum for children aged 0–5 years aims to provide these practitioners with the necessary skills to address the mental health needs of this group of children. This aligns well with the ‘NHS Long-Term Plan’ and the ‘NHS Long-Term Workforce Plan’.

# Who is the course for?

This course is aimed at the early years workforce and the broader CYP mental health system. Anyone considering the course is expected to have 2 years’ experience of working professionally with children and families (for example, as a family support worker, psychosocial liaison officer, midwife, health visitor or child and family practitioner) within a professional setting concerned with the mental health, development and wellbeing of children or young people and families. As the course is a Postgraduate Diploma, candidates need to be able to complete academic work at postgraduate level, which can be demonstrated through previous qualifications, typically an undergraduate degree or equivalent. NHS England is committed to widening access to training opportunities, so these capabilities can also be demonstrated through a Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes portfolio in place of prior qualifications.

It is also desirable for candidates to have training in a mental health-related profession (for example, psychology, nursing, health visiting, social work, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, special needs teaching, midwifery, psychotherapy, or counselling) and 2 years’ experience of working within a professional setting concerned with the mental health, development and wellbeing of infants aged 0–5. However, learners on this course have included staff with significant experience with infants, young children and families and a relevant undergraduate degree or equivalent, rather than a professional qualification.

# Programme details

The Infant and Early Years training programme aims to furnish both those working with 0–2s and those working with 3–5s with the skills necessary to deliver the right evidence-based interventions. This means that the course has two strands: 1) those on the parent–infant pathway will acquire the knowledge and skills to promote parental sensitivity and infant attachment in vulnerable parents/carers and babies; and 2) those on the early childhood pathway will acquire the knowledge and skills to deliver evidence-based parenting support to manage emerging anxiety and behavioural problems. On both strands, learners will be supported to achieve a standard of practice that confers accreditation in an evidence-based intervention. For the parent–infant pathway strand this is either VIPP or VIG, and for the early childhood pathway this is Incredible Years or an equivalent evidence-based parenting intervention.

The Infant and Early Years training is structured into 3 primary units:

* Key knowledge, theory, and frameworks for working with 0–5s (15 credits): A broad foundation of knowledge, across the full age range of 0–5 years, of the core principles of early child development, context, theory, and ethical frameworks.
* Foundations of early years assessment and formulation (30 credits): A focus on assessment, formulation, and safeguarding, with common content for all trainees, and selected specialist elements for trainees on the parent–infant pathway and the early childhood pathway.
* Interventions for 0–5s (45 credits): A focus on intervention, with some shared content on common principles and interventions for regulatory difficulties, and specialist elements for trainees on the parent–infant pathway and the early childhood pathway, with each respectively leading to accreditation for VIPP/VIG and Incredible Years or similar evidence-based intervention for behavioural management.

The methods by which competencies will be assessed may vary across regions but all programmes will minimally include the following:

* assessment of video-recorded therapy sessions
* reports of individual treatments that demonstrate the capacity to make theory–practice links and to integrate outcomes information into practice
* reports on feedback from supervisors, young people and/or parents/carers on their experience of the therapy offered
* a summary report of the therapist’s clinical outcomes over the training period

# The offer

The course is available at no cost to participants, with tuition fees fully funded by NHS England Workforce, Training and Education. However, it is the responsibility of individual services to ensure uninterrupted operation while their candidates attend the training sessions.

# Summary

It is critical that key frontline practitioners (for example, health visitors, children’s centre workers and social care practitioners) have the necessary skills to support children who may be experiencing regulatory, social, emotional or conduct problems in the first 5 years of life. This training provides the foundations to assess, formulate and intervene, and the competencies to offer support through a NICE-recommended evidence-based intervention. This is an ideal training course for staff seeking foundational knowledge and skills in working with 0-5s and seeking to specialise in working with either 0–2s or 3–5s.

1. See for example, Sroufe, L.A. (2005). ‘Attachment and development: A prospective, longitudinal study from birth to adulthood’. In *Attachment & Human Development* 7(4): 349-367. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)